*Fear of God and*
*the Beginning of Wisdom*

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# *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom*

## The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia

ADAM H. BECKER

PENN

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*For Leyla*
*Da stieg ein Baum . . . und ein Wassermulch!*

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# Preface

This book delineates an intellectual and institutional history of the scholastic culture of the Church of the East in the late antique and early Islamic periods. The primary focus will be on the School of Nisibis, the major intellectual center of the Church of the East in the sixth and early seventh centuries C.E. and an institution of learning unprecedented in antiquity. The significance of the School of Nisibis has been appreciated by some scholars, but only a few have studied its sources. However, like Nisibis itself, sitting on the border between the Roman and Sasanian Empires, the sources from the School—and Syriac studies in general—stand at the convergence of several diverse fields and therefore deserve far greater consideration.

Aside from the interest that this book may have to scholars who work in Syriac studies and on "Oriental" Christianity more broadly, it is my hope that the analysis contained herein will be of use to scholars in closely related but unfortunately often intellectually and institutionally separate fields. The study of the East-Syrian school movement promises to shed light on the development of Christian *paideia* in Late Antiquity, the rise of the Babylonian Jewish academies, and the background to the burgeoning Muslim intellectual culture of the early 'Abbāsid period.

I am aware that a synthetic study such as this is premature due to the amount of foundational work that still needs to be done in the Syriac sources (such as editing of texts). I hope that my intellectual saltation from source to source and from topic to topic will be indulged by those who work within the field of Syriac studies and that this work will direct scholars of other fields towards examining the fascinating sources of the Church of the East.

The current scholarly project of erasing the false boundaries created by early Christian notions of heresy contains in its historiographical paradigm an implicit political critique of an approach to human social life that fails to accept the inevitability of difference in the past as well as in

the present. The historiography of Christianity continues to push beyond the boundaries of ecclesiastical history established by the heresiologists and church historians of the patristic age. This book does not engage with the recent scholarly subversion of "heresy," but points to the kind of history that can be done when such false distinctions are ignored and indigenous Christian traditions are studied as semi-autonomous historical developments.[1] Christianity, like any other generative and widespread cultural institution, has been and no doubt will always be pluriform, and the Syriac tradition itself is a genus with a number of species.

Although as a historian I tend to focus on the radical discontinuities between one period and another, examining these discontinuities as the central points of renegotiation in the transition from one author or one period to the next, it would be disingenuous of me to fail to acknowledge the living churches which identify with the tradition of which I am a student. The East Syrians or "Nestorians," as their enemies preferred to call them, continue to exist today in the Middle East, South India, and the worldwide diaspora that spans from Sweden to the American Midwest to Australia.[2] They have been divided into a number of churches, including the two main ones of their ancestral homeland, the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East and the Chaldean Catholic Church, but the members of each—as well as their longtime historical adversaries, such as the Syrian Orthodox (West-Syrian) Church—identify strongly with the Syriac tradition, even elevating it, not unlike many Jews since the rise of Zionism, to a national status, one even requiring, according to some, the national autonomy that this implies.

I do not presume to speak for Syriac Christians. However, as one whose country now occupies the land where many of these Christians have lived for centuries, I am concerned about the present complex of circumstances endangering the Syriac communities of Mesopotamia and can't help but notice the striking similarity between these circumstances and those which led to the more traumatic episodes in the history of Syriac Christians over the last two centuries, including the slaughter of many during what is commonly known as the Armenian genocide. On the one side, some nationalists in Iraq and those Muslims with an especially reified and newfangled notion of the *Umma* are at times complicit in attacks on Syriac Christians, whom they consider part of a larger Western Christian (and "Zionist") conspiracy to strip Iraq of its autonomy and natural resources. On the other, foreign invaders often employ universalist notions, whether "Christian fellowship" or its secularized twin, "Human Rights," which fail to recognize the autonomous value of indigenous Christianity and the local forms of negotiating differences with Muslim compatriots. Christian love and the Rights of Man (and

Woman) are all well and good. But often in the history of foreign interaction with Christians of the Middle East local Christian cultures have been disdained, even despised, for a one-size-fits-all form of Christianity, and local Christians have suffered immeasurably from the larger geopolitical conflicts of which they often serve as mere pawns.

*ʾal ʾarʿā šlāmā w-sabrā ṭābā la-bnay ʾnāšā*
—Luke 2:14 (Peshitta Version)

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# Note on Transliteration, Spelling, and Terminology

I have decided to transliterate all Syriac words in the text in order to make the book more accessible to scholars with a knowledge of other Semitic languages. In transliterating Syriac words and names I have tried to be accurate without being tedious. For the letter *shin* I use š. The letters *heth* and *teth* are marked by an under dot (ḥ, ṭ). It may seem arbitrary to the purist, but for the sake of simplicity I decided of the *bgadkephat* letters to differentiate only between "p" (*qušš̈āyā*) and the spirantized form, "ph" (*rukkākā*), for example, in the common word "yullphānā" and its cognates. Macrons appear over the long vowels i, o, and u, despite the fact that this is a historical transliteration and Syriac itself does not note the difference in vowel quantity between the long and short forms of these vowels. I have inserted half vowels (ĕ) to make the pronunciation of Syriac names easier for nonspecialists. Names that have familiar Western equivalents I have rendered in the more commonly recognizable form, for example, Simeon instead of Šem'on. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. I have occasionally altered others' translations to fit the Syriac better, to emphasize some aspect of the text important to my greater argument, or to be consistent with the general practice of the volume.

I am aware of the numerous terminological problems that arise in any discussion of "Syriac Christianity," itself a term not wholly unambiguous. I opted for the politically correct and more accurate "Miaphysite" instead of the more commonly recognized "Monophysite." The difference is subtle, but "Monophysite" suggests the allowance for only one nature in the Incarnation, while "Miaphysite" places an emphasis on the incarnate Word's unity of nature, which derives originally from two distinct natures. "West-Syrian" is used to refer to Syriac Christian Miaphysites, although this term becomes problematic when used for the earlier period when such identities were still developing. "East-Syrian" is certainly a

better term than "Nestorian" for the "Church of the East," that is, Christians in the Sasanian Empire who maintained a more conservative Antiochene theology and identified themselves with the figure of Nestorius. The historical Nestorius and his actual theological positions have only been reconstructed with difficulty in modernity.

# Chronology

| | |
|---|---|
| 363 | Julian the Apostate dies; Nisibis ceded to the Sasanian Empire; Ephrem of Nisibis migrates to Edessa |
| 373 | Ephrem dies |
| 399 | Evagrius of Pontus dies |
| c. 400 | Greek Patristic literature begins to be translated into Syriac |
| 428 | Theodore of Mopsuestia dies |
| 431 | Council of Ephesus (Third Ecumenical Council) |
| 435/6 | Bishop Rabbula of Edessa dies |
| 449 | "Robber" Council of Ephesus |
| 451 | Council of Chalcedon (Fourth Ecumenical Council) |
| 457 | Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, dies |
| 474–475, 476–91 | Reign of Zeno |
| 489 | Closure of the School of the Persians of Edessa |
| c. 500 | Neoplatonic Commentaries begin to be translated into Syriac |
| 503 | Narsai dies after this date |
| c. 510–569 | Abraham of Bēt Rabban, head of the School of Nisibis |
| 517/26 | Ammonius the Neoplatonist dies |
| 521 | Jacob of Sarug dies |
| 527–565 | Reign of Justinian |
| 531–579 | Khosro I |
| 533–543 | Three Chapters Controversy |
| c. 536 | Sergius of Rēšʿaynā dies |
| 542–c. 549 | Junillus Africanus, *Quaestor Sacri Palatii* at Justinian's court |
| 540–552 | Catholicate of Mār Abā |
| 553 | Council of Constantinople (Fifth Ecumenical Council) |

| | |
|---|---|
| 569 | Terminus post quem for the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā |
| 571–c. 610 | Ḥĕnānā, head of the School of Nisibis; period in which the *Cause* was composed (probably before 605) |
| c. 571 | Monastery of Abraham of Kaškar founded |
| 590–628 | Khosro II |
| 596 | East-Syrian Synod under Catholicos Sabrīšōʿ |
| 602 | Proem of the Statutes of the School of Nisibis |
| 605 | East-Syrian Synod under Catholicos Gregory I |
| 612 | East-Syrian Synod under Bābai the Great |
| 614/15 | Gabriel's Colophon |
| 628 or 630 | Bābai the Great dies |
| 637 | Fall of Seleucia-Ctesiphon to the Arabs |
| 659 | Catholicos Īšōʿyahb III dies |
| late 7th century | Isaac of Niniveh, Dadīšōʿ Qaṭrāyā, Simeon d-Ṭaybūtēh |
| 823 | Timothy I dies |
| late 8th–mid-9th century | Īšōʿdĕnaḥ of Basra, *Book of Chastity* |
| 9th century | Thomas of Margā, *Book of Governors* |
| 912–1020 | *Chronicle of Siirt* |

# Introduction

This book was completed in the twenty-fifth year of Khosro, the son of Hurmuz, King of the Persians (614/5 C.E.), in the sacred city of Nisibis during the tenure of the diligent bishop, Mār Baššā the Metropolitan, and Mār Matthew, Head of the Exegetes, and Mār Aḥā the Reader, and Mār Barsāhdē the Elementary Instructor. The worthless sinner, Gabriel from Bēt Qaṭrāyē, possessed it as his own and collated it with a great effort in the presence of the true teacher, Mār Māranzĕkā, from among the fathers, that it might be a benefit for himself and for his companions. Anyone who looks upon it and reads it, let him pray to the Lord for him that he might receive mercy by grace and let him not cut out from it a dot or a letter except with great enquiry. Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, one nature, three persons, one power, one will, incomprehensible, for ever and ever.[1]

It may have been the same scribe, Gabriel of Bēt Qaṭrāyē,[2] who, on the outer margin of the page on which this colophon appears, incised what seem to be magical characters, evidence of another ritual practice (like the colophon itself) that would protect the artifact as well as signify the end of the scribe's labors. After the arduous task of creating a manuscript, it must have been a small additional burden, yet one full of pleasure, to compose a colophon. Perhaps the colophon's phrasing, despite its clichés and commonplaces, rolled around in the scribe's mind as he fantasized about the completion of his task. Like a preface, a colophon, with its mulled-over statement of authorial identity, offers a view, if only for a moment, into the world in which a manuscript was produced.

Like Roman thinkers (such as Cicero himself) who made extended stays in the Greek East in order to acquire the cultural capital of philosophy and rhetoric, or medieval Muslim scholars who roamed as far as the *Umma* stretched in search of knowledge, Gabriel had traveled far from his home in the Qatar region to study at Nisibis in northwest Mesopotamia, from the southern climes of the Sasanian Empire to its northwestern border with Rome.[3] Nisibis, or Nusaybin in modern Turkey, lies on the plain just south of the Tur ʿAbdin ("the mountain of the slaves [of God]"), a rocky plateau which, with its numerous village churches and monasteries, some still occupied, remains the actual and spiritual

homeland for many Syrian Orthodox (West-Syrian) Christians today. Thirty kilometers northwest of Nisibis was the Roman fort town of Dara, clearly delineating where one empire began and another ended. The status of Nisibis as a border town may in fact explain why the school at which Gabriel studied was established there in the first place: in 489 C.E. the Roman emperor Zeno gave the bishop of Edessa permission to close the theologically aberrant School of the Persians, whose members then fled into the Persian Empire and founded the School of Nisibis.

After the removal of the School of the Persians from Edessa, Narsai, the first head of the School of Nisibis, traveled to Nisibis where, according to the School's own tradition, he was implored by the bishop of the city, the controversial Barṣaumā, to settle there and refound the School.[4] As the first head of the School, Narsai seems to have brought the exegesis and scholarly practices of Edessa with him to Nisibis; under the influence of the monastic movement the new school was provided with canons regulating the behavior of students and teachers and limiting their interaction with the outside world. Narsai led the School until his death in c. 503.[5] Elisha bar Quzbāyē (c. 503–510) followed, and then Abraham of Bēt Rabban held the office of head exegete until 569. However, the chronology is confused and it seems that there were other leaders who guided the School at this time, including from 565 to 568 Īšō'yahb of Arzūn, who would go on to be Īšō'yahb I, Catholicos of the Church of the East (582–595). The period of Abraham of Bēt Rabban's tenure of office was a time of rapid growth for the School. The canons established by Narsai were ratified, the School received a local village as an endowment, baths were constructed, and some students began to study medicine.

When Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene, the director of the School of Nisibis in the late sixth and early seventh centuries (c. 571–c. 612), was accused of straying outside the Church of the East's exegetical and theological limits as set forth by the standard found in the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the controversy that resulted led to the mass exodus of much of the School's personnel. Ḥĕnānā was condemned by a church council in 605 as well as polemicized against by Bābai the Great, the major intellectual and ecclesiastical leader of the day.[6] While Ḥĕnānā led the School new canons were introduced in 590, with further ratification and a proem added in 602 that alludes, however darkly, to recent tensions within the community.[7]

Gabriel of Bēt Qaṭrāyē was copying a manuscript of the Gospels soon after these events. The colophon of this manuscript is dated by the tenure of officeholders in the three institutional hierarchies to which he owed his allegiance: shah, bishop, and schoolmaster. Following the practice found in other sources for the School of Nisibis, Gabriel divides the different schoolmasters into a tripartite hierarchy, running from the

elementary reading instructor to the teacher of advanced exegesis, a hierarchy that is reminiscent of the three ranks of teachers in classical antiquity. The final figure in the list, Mār Māranzĕkā, seems to be Gabriel's de facto master in the School, perhaps an interpreter (*bādōqā*) under whom he studied.

Gabriel was writing at a tumultuous time both for his school and for the Church of the East as a whole. The doxology at the end of the colophon is not the mere repetition of an age-old formula, but, like most creedal statements, it contemporaneously rejects all statements other than its own affirmations. The statements of faith proposed by the series of church councils from the late fifth through the seventh centuries suggest that the theology of the Church of the East was continually under threat (or at least was perceived to be).[8] By the late sixth century West-Syrian, or Miaphysite, Christology had made inroads into the East, and East Syrians had reason to fear, especially since the shah, Khosro II (591–628), retained the Miaphysite Gabriel of Sinjar as his court physician.[9] When the East-Syrian Catholicos Gregory I died in 608/9, Khosro would not permit a new Catholicos to be selected, and the church would continue in this acephalous state until 628.[10] The shah even called an assembly in 612, at which East and West Syrians engaged in christological dispute.[11] The church gained several well-known martyrs at this time, the most famous being George (born Mihrmāh-gushnasp), an attendee at the assembly of 612 whose life and martyrdom were memorialized by Bābai the Great (d. 628).[12] At the same time, schism and apostasy continued to destabilize the church. Only a few years after the Ḥĕnānā episode, the church was challenged by Sāhdōnā (Martyrios), an East-Syrian ascetic writer and alumnus of Nisibis, who stirred a controversy when he apparently apostatized from East-Syrian orthodoxy.[13]

These events were only the beginning of a difficult century for the Church of the East. Despite the little impact it had on their position vis-à-vis the powers that be, the Church of the East, like the Jews as well as other Christian communities in the region, had its own apocalyptic response to the radical changes brought on by the Arab conquest.[14] Even before the fall of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 637 and the rest of Mesopotamia soon after, within a year of Gabriel's colophon the Persians besieged and laid waste to Jerusalem (614), a city now sacred to all Christians, even those outside the Roman Empire.[15]

However, despite the difficulty of the times, a culture of learning persisted at the School of Nisibis. Perhaps Gabriel had traveled all the way from Bēt Qaṭrāyē because of the great prestige of the School. Though his humility may not have acknowledged such grasping for distinction, the learning he would receive there and, perhaps even more significantly, the connections he could make would have launched him on a

successful career within the ecclesiastical hierarchy or as a leader in one of the many monasteries sprouting up throughout the East from the late sixth century onwards. He could also have proceeded to a position at another East-Syrian school, or even founded his own. Two of the School's many alumni, whom Gabriel may have known and who would make a name for themselves within the church, were the two Catholicoi, Īšōʿyahb II (628–644/6 C.E.) and Īšōʿyahb III (647/50–659), both of whom left the School during the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā.

A Gabriel of Bēt Qaṭrāyē, who was possibly a relative of the great East-Syrian mystic Isaac of Nineveh and may even have been—although it is unlikely—identical with the Gabriel of the above colophon, taught at the School of Seleucia in the capital of the Sasanian Empire, where he was the teacher of Ḥĕnānīšōʿ, the Catholicos of the Church of the East, who was banished from his office in 692.[16] He lived his last years in a monastery outside Nineveh until he succumbed to the plague in 699/700.[17] In its entry on the works of Ḥĕnānīšōʿ "the Lame," ʿAbdīšōʿ bar Bĕrīkā of Nisibis's great fourteenth-century poetical bibliography of Syriac writers states that among Ḥĕnānīšōʿ's works there were "two treatises of use to the school and an elucidation of the Analytics (of Aristotle)."[18] The tradition of learned Catholicoi, going back to the great Mār Abā (d. 552), an alumnus of the School of Nisibis in the mid-sixth century, would continue, most notably with Timothy I, whom the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mahdī (d. 785) commissioned to translate Aristotle's *Topics* into Arabic along with Abū-Nūḥ, a Christian in the bureau of the governor of Mosul.[19]

Thus, among the East (and West) Syrians, a learned class was developing that would play a significant role in the early Arabic translation movement.[20] However, while scholars generally acknowledge the role of Syriac Christians in the early days of the grand cultural project of transferring Greek philosophy and science into a Semitic language, and while figures such as Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq or even the earlier West-Syrian Sergius of Rēšʿaynā are cited as noteworthy translators, insufficient recognition has been given to the intellectual culture that made Sergius's work relevant in the East and Ḥunayn's possible at all: that is, the East-Syrian school movement, the importance of which is overshadowed by the massive influence of the very endeavors for which the school movement served as a catalyst.[21] The significance of the East-Syrian school movement as the background to the intellectual culture to come has not yet been fully appreciated.

Furthermore, understanding the school movement may shed light on similar phenomena contemporary with it. The culture of the love of learning and respect for the master's authority—which we catch a glimpse of in Gabriel's colophon—flourished at the same time and in the same place as that of the producers of one of the great cultural products of

the late antique and early medieval Near East: the Babylonian Talmud.[22] Jews and Christians in Mesopotamia spoke the same language, lived under the same rulers, practiced the same magic, engaged in mystical and eschatological speculation, and shared scriptures as well as a similar fixation on the ongoing and eternal relevance of those scriptures.[23] They developed similar institutions aimed at inculcating an identity in young males that defined each of them as essentially a *homo discens*, a learning human, or rather, a *res discens*, a learning entity, since learning was understood as an essential characteristic of their humanity.

The preceding historical pastiche of late antique Mesopotamian intellectual life is a depiction of the broader world with which this book is engaged.[24] For in what follows I examine the development of the East-Syrian school movement, focusing in particular on the evolution of the "School of the Persians," a thinly attested intellectual circle, into the monastic School of Nisibis, a socially distinct institution of learning significant of, as well as a formative influence on, the school culture of late antique Mesopotamia.[25] As far as I have been able to tell there are no extant artifacts or material remains from the School of Nisibis except the manuscript of the Gospels that Gabriel of Bēt Qaṭrāyē copied and collated in the period after the School's apogee.

All remains from the School of Nisibis and from East-Syrian school culture in this period are literary. The main intellectual-historical source for the School of Nisibis and the source for much of this book is centered around is the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* (=*Cause*). Composed in the late sixth century, the *Cause* is an address to the incoming class of the School of Nisibis that purports to give a history of the transmission of learning, beginning with God's instruction of the angels at the time of creation and concluding with the tenure of Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene as head of the School at the time of the speech's composition.

In its course, the *Cause* idiosyncratically combines diverse intellectual traditions, such as the theology of the fifth-century Greek church father Theodore of Mopsuestia and the indigenous ideas of the fourth-century master of Syriac poetry, Ephrem of Nisibis. Influenced by Neoplatonic texts and apparently advocating the first step in spiritual development according to the influential monastic writer, Evagrius of Pontus (345–399), the *Cause* incorporates Aristotelian logic to develop an epistemological and ontological perspective that allows for a kind of natural theology: it argues that the rational order of creation in all its diversity allows us to know God. The *Cause* thus presents a snapshot of life at the School of Nisibis at the end of the sixth century, but it also serves as a major source for the early history of the School and its predecessor institution, the School of the Persians. Although the *Cause* culminates in a panegyric to Ḥĕnānā, the contemporary head of the School, evidence suggests that its

author was one of many schoolmen to leave, along with the two future Catholicoi, Išōʿyahb II and Īšōʿyahb III, during the crisis that occurred under Ḥĕnānā's tenure of office.[26]

## Continuity and Change in the Transmission of Knowledge in Late Antiquity

The Greco-Roman rhetorical form of learning that developed in the Classical period and became standardized in the Hellenistic period was left relatively unaltered by the progressive Christianization of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity.[27] The ancient form of learning was central to the continuing coherence of the ancient elite and, as long as Rome or at least a sense of what we might call *Romanitas* among the elite in places such as Gaul persisted, so did ancient institutions of learning.[28] In fact, they even thrived. To be sure, there were attempts at creating a new, alternative form of Christian education—by replacing the pagan classics with poetic renditions of the Gospels, for example—but these were exceptions that arose in the more overt instances of *Kulturkampf* such as occurred under the emperor Julian the Apostate (d. 363). Julian had tried to ban the use of pagan classics, such as Homer and Virgil, by Christian teachers, thus effectively preventing them from carrying out any instruction at all, since the ancient curriculum for non-Christians and Christians alike was based upon the classics.[29]

The more common Christian sentiment can be found rather in the work of such figures as Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390), who argued against Julian that the word "Greek" could be bifurcated into two distinct meanings, "pagan" and "civilized," and that these two separate categories need not be conflated.[30] Furthermore, lest we unfairly misunderstand them as hypocrites or as bearing bad faith, fourth- and fifth-century figures such as Nonnos of Panopolis, who "is obviously someone to be taken as a man of his age and not to be divided into a schizophrenic with pagan and Christian sides—or a pagan past and a Christian present, or the opposite,"[31] or Synesius of Cyrene, the "Philosopher-Bishop," must be seen as examples of the hybridity that could exist between the poles of Christianity and Hellenism.[32] An explicit agenda of appropriating classical learning can be found in various works of the patristic corpus, most notably in the West in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* (early fifth century).[33] However, in the newly fledged monastic movement a scripturally based culture developed which acted as a stimulus to the creation of a form of learning with new textual and intellectual priorities. And yet, despite some exceptions, this new form of learning was not an alternative to traditional forms, because it functioned in a completely different way.

To be sure, the Bible was the central text for earlier Christian intellectuals, such as Origen of Alexandria in the third century, who incorporated a classical text-critical and hermeneutical methodology into the study of scripture. However, it is doubtful whether Origen was attempting to develop a completely autonomous Christian culture. Rather, for him and for other Christian intellectuals after him, the traditional curriculum was a tried and true method of learning. Christian intellectuals of the second and third centuries such as Justin Martyr, certain so-called Gnostics (e.g., Basileides, Valentinus), and Origen were masters of small circles of disciples and must be understood as playing a role similar to that of the philosopher or rhetor.[34] They taught select groups out of the small number of people who had access to literate education.[35] Beyond individual intellectuals and their circles, anything resembling a large-scale, specifically Christian form of learning can be found only in the scriptural study of the monastery from the fourth century onward.[36] This monastic literate culture was distinct from the mainstream rhetorical culture and spread to places as far afield as Ireland, England, and Mesopotamia, all places on the margins of Roman space where classical learning would have offered little benefit. In its place, this new form of learning promoted the study of Christian scripture and eventually the works of exegetical and ascetic "Fathers," such as, among the East Syrians, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Evagrius of Pontus.

However, we must be wary of viewing the disappearance of classical learning and the growth of monastic learning as a simple displacement of the one by the other. The traditional form of learning continued in some places deep into the Middle Ages. Countering his previous statements about Late Antiquity being a culture of decline, Henri Marrou, the great historian of ancient education, argued that *paideia* disappeared in the West only because of the turmoil caused by the barbarian invasions, and not because of Christianity per se.[37] His student Pierre Riché went one step further and demonstrated how this form of lay education can be found up to the sixth and seventh centuries in Gaul, Spain, and North Africa, and even later in Italy.[38]

In a concise treatment of the subject, Peter Heather builds on Riché's work and explains the complex manner in which classical learning eventually disappeared from Gaul.[39] The new, post-Roman states that formed in this period relied on Roman provincial practices; however, the Roman bureaucracy to which *paideia* often provided access no longer existed, and therefore the utility of the classical curriculum was lost. Of course there was also some Christian antipathy toward classical learning (Caesarius of Arles, for example, allegorizes the learning of this world into the ten plagues of Egypt[40]), but there was just as much continued interest

in traditional learning among the old aristocratic class. State support, if it was significant enough to have had much effect in the first place, disappeared.[41] In addition, new literary forms may have drawn some interest away from traditional ones. However, the most significant factor is that classical learning no longer retained the function it served under the empire—that of distinguishing elites.[42] Over several hundred years, new virtues developed as the aristocratic class was transformed into a military elite and classical learning slowly disappeared.[43]

The continued existence of lay learning must be seen as a backdrop to the slow development of Christian forms of learning. Otherwise, the aims and significance of certain Christian authors will be misconstrued. For example, Cassiodorus (d. 583), composed his influential *Institutes* in two books: one on biblical interpretation and the other on the liberal arts.[44] In the later Middle Ages, when classical learning was hard to come by, the second book of the *Institutes* enjoyed its own separate textual transmission on account of its popularity. Modern scholars followed medieval Christians' interests and understood Cassiodorus's project to be one of preserving the dying culture of antiquity. This misses Cassiodorus's whole point: he specifically states in his introduction that his greater project was inspired by the fact that secular schools were flourishing.[45] The second book of the *Institutes* should be seen as an appendix for those who have not been fortunate enough to acquire classical learning, or perhaps as a review, but not as something central to his project, which is biblical interpretation.

Both Augustine and Cassiodorus bring classical techniques to the study of scripture, but take for granted that classical learning in its own right is a good thing and a requirement for elite men. In contrast, the Venerable Bede (d. 735) could only put forth a monophonic Christian form of learning, because in his Northumbrian monastery in the early eighth century the background melody of the classical transmission of knowledge could no longer be heard.[46] This can be seen in the fact that whereas Christians since Justin Martyr (relying on a second-temple Jewish claim) argued that Greek (i.e., secular) wisdom derives from the Bible, Bede repeats this assertion in a context in which there never were any Greeks (i.e., people with secular learning). In Bede's world, the learned traditions of the Mediterranean were mainlined directly from Rome via the knowledge and manuscripts brought north by such figures as Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 690), and Benedict Biscop (d. 690).[47]

The slow decline of classical learning in the West suggests that there were even stronger continuities in the Greek East, where, despite intermittent Persian wars and other phenomena leading to social anomie (such as the plague), less destabilization occurred than in the West until the Arab conquest in the mid-seventh century. However, even further East,

in the Sasanian Empire, elites did not distinguish themselves through classical learning, and Christians were a generally tolerated, occasionally persecuted religious community distinct from the aristocratic and priestly cultures of the ruling class. The East-Syrian school movement, the subject of this book, shares a certain resemblance to the bookish culture of Northumbria, since both developed *outside* Roman space, spurred on by the new monastic focus on scripture and the cannibalization of certain classical texts and ideas. Because the rhetorical training that gave coherence to imperial elites had no function outside the empire, the East Syrians, like the Northumbrians, developed a new curriculum, based upon the study of scripture while employing classical learning as found in books being brought from Mediterranean intellectual centers.

## Learning in the Syriac Milieu

Some form of pre-Christian Aramaic literary culture existed, although its aesthetic was not as finely developed as that of Greek and Latin literature and the number of its works was probably small in comparison. The corpus of ancient Jewish literature extant in Aramaic is part of the broader literate Aramaic culture of the Near East. To be sure, Jews may have had a particular relationship to the written word that distinguished them from their neighbors, but it is also quite likely that the extant wisdom tale and proverbs of Aḥiqar, the various early inscriptions, and the more mundane legal documents extant from the third century point to a literate culture whose history has been erased by the arbitrary selection of textual transmission as well as by the un-Egyptian climate of Mesopotamia, which does not preserve documents well.[48] Sources are few, and the seemingly random preservation of one text as opposed to another can sharply affect our perspective on this whole period.[49] No doubt a combination of Jewish and local learning lay behind the Peshitta itself, the Syriac version of the Bible translated from the Hebrew some time in the late second or early third centuries.[50] Such a massive and demonstrably meticulous project would have required a sophisticated culture of (scribal) learning.

Furthermore, the wide dissemination of Aramaic inscriptions, even to the distant opposite end of the Roman Empire, demonstrates the importance of the written form of the language to its speakers. In particular, this can be seen with the Palmyrene inscriptions, which may reflect the strong local ethnic identity of this Aramaic-speaking cosmopolitan center.[51] We may assume that this literate culture had some form of scribal learning that was in some way related to traditional Near Eastern practices.[52] By the late fourth century we already have evidence of Christian scribal training based upon the Psalms.[53]

One of the earliest pieces of Syriac literature, the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* of Bardaiṣan, is a philosophical dialogue on the power that custom wields over human beings and how it can overcome even the fate given them by the stars. It is a sophisticated, even elegant, piece of literature that is clearly modeled on the genre of the Platonic dialogue.[54] Such literature was probably not created ex nihilo, but it, along with artifacts such as the figures of the proud, elite families depicted in Edessene tomb mosaics from c. 200, points to a local aristocratic culture and to the literary interests that this culture enjoyed.[55] Edessa, apparently the center of this literary culture, was ruled by a royal family, the Abgarids, whose fame spread to the West (and lasted for centuries with the development of the myth of the king's conversion to Christianity, as we find, for example, in the *Teaching of Addai*).[56]

Further to the east within the Sasanian realm, Aphrahat, the so-called Persian Sage, composed his *Demonstrations* in the 330s and 340s. This corpus must have come from a literate context in which the work of a homilist and the scriptural learning it entailed were not uncommon.[57] Similarly, the oeuvre of Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) raises questions about a previous poetic literary tradition in Syriac, since the undisputed heavyweight champion of Syriac poetry must have been participating in *some* kind of previous tradition.[58] (Even "Homer" had predecessors of sorts!) Bardaiṣan was supposedly writing *madrašē* (stanzaic poems) c. 200,[59] and from the mid-third century onwards the corpus of Manichean poetry spread throughout the Near East and Mediterranean.[60] Poetry would continue to be a major tool of theological speculation and controversy in Syriac for some time. In the late fifth and early sixth centuries, Jacob of Sarug, the brilliant poet in the line of Ephrem, and Narsai, his far more prosaic elder, used poetry to articulate their particular brand of theology and exegesis. However, by this time the production of Syriac literature was proceeding apace.

An important factor with regard to the rise of Syriac literary culture is Hellenization.[61] Bardaiṣan's Platonic dialogue is an obvious example, but recently even Ephrem has been put under the Greek microscope.[62] Scholars can no longer generalize about Syriac with throwaway lines about its "pure Semitic" or "unhellenized" nature.[63] This simplistic paradigm is as absurd as the second-century Syrian Christian Tatian's statement in his *Oratio ad Graecos*, where he argues for the superiority of the *Bárbaroi* over the wicked Greeks using a Greek peppered with the urbane rhetoric of the classroom (thus repeating the notion going back to Herodotus and Plato that Barbarian wisdom precedes the Greek).[64]

The scholarly debates over whether the original language of most of the extant Syriac literature predating Aphrahat and Ephrem was Syriac or Greek reveal the bilingual/bicultural context of early Syriac literature.[65]

A perfect analogy for our problem is in the dual identity of Edessa itself, which most likely received its Greek name in 303/2 B.C.E. from the eponymous city in Macedonia but continued to be called Urhai in Aramaic for centuries. It did not immediately become Edessa, the hellenized city, once it was taken from the Achaemenids. We have to come to terms with Urhai and Edessa existing at the same time and the same place. For the pre-Christian period, we simply do not have enough information to say exactly when one city began and the other ended. One of the Edessene funerary mosaics will suffice to show how Urhai and Edessa could coexist. We see a handsome man with a turban—does this signify him as an Easterner, as it does in classical art, or just as a local?—strumming a harp, with various animals attentively gazing at him, and although the writing on the piece is in Syriac, the figure is obviously the Greek Orpheus.[66]

Some elites in Roman Syria received a Greek education. Lucian of Samosata, the famous Greek satirist and stylist of the second century C.E., was always self-conscious of the slight Syriac accent that could be heard when he spoke Greek.[67] This Greek learning in a predominantly Aramaic-speaking region may have continued until the end of the late antique period. Our limited evidence must be read in the correct manner. The references to lay Greek learning are few, but this paucity may indicate that the institution was so common that it was taken for granted by the sources. This is the same problem that Riché dealt with in the West: at what point does silence in the sources change from evidence of a commonplace to evidence of an absence?

In the *Life of Rabbula,* we read about the young aristocrat receiving training in "Greek letters and literature"[68] before his eventual career as the (overly) zealous bishop of Edessa (d. 435/6). In a Syriac fragment of a speech he gave in Greek in Constantinople in 431, he admits the discomfort he feels in speaking, perhaps alluding to his poor Greek, and yet it is just as likely that this is merely an instance of the traditional *recusatio.*[69] In the sixth century John of Tella is depicted as receiving the same training in "Greek letters and literature" before he flees into the monastery.[70] It is significant that his *Life* places John in a wholly Christian society where Greek institutions persist. These unexplained references to "Greek letters and literature" imply a context where what such learning entailed was common knowledge: it was the same *paideia* that had existed for centuries. There is a parallel phenomenon in the *Life of Mār Abā,* which tells us that the future Catholicos receives training in "Persian letters and literature" but not what such training entailed. Much less is known of elite forms of learning in Persia.[71] In the case of Abā, however, the scribal training that the text refers to would have required the painstaking acquisition of the system of expressing Persian words via Aramaic ideograms that had developed over several centuries. The training of elites

in Greek *paideia* and Sasanian aristocratic pastimes such as horsemanship and hunting, as well as the more mundane scribal training required to maintain society (and those elites), are wholly different phenomena from the new form of learning developing in a new location for the transmission of knowledge: the East-Syrian School.[72]

## The East-Syrian School Movement: A New Ideology and Practice of Learning

Aside from its place within the trajectory of learning in Late Antiquity, the development of the East-Syrian school movement must be understood within the broader context of the evolution of a distinct East-Syrian communal identity. In contrast to the Chalcedonian and Miaphysite (including West-Syrian) churches of the Christian Roman Empire, the Church of the East existed as a minority institution in the Zoroastrian-dominated Sasanian Empire.[73] In this context a specifically East-Syrian form of Christianity developed. In fact, the contours of the East-Syrian communal identity that we find in the Islamic period were already in place by the late Sasanian period.[74] The following events in the early fifth through the sixth centuries contributed to the evolution of this communal identity: the assimilation and subordination of the church to the structure of the Sasanian empire,[75] the development of a distinctly East-Syrian Christology,[76] the spread of East-Syrian "reform" monasticism,[77] the formation of East-Syrian exegesis,[78] and the growth of canon law.[79]

However, despite its formation in tandem with the development of an autonomous East-Syrian church, the East-Syrian school movement may be examined as a distinct phenomenon in its own right. It is tempting to use the term "scholasticism" to describe the object of this study. Slipping into such a usage is made even easier by the terms actually used by East Syrians themselves to describe the different parts of the school movement. The words for "school" (Syriac *eskōlā* or *eskōlē*) and "student or person associated with a school" (Syriac *eskōlāyā*) clearly derive from the Greek *scholē*, which is obviously also the root of Western cognate terms. However, the use of the word "scholastic" to describe the culture of the East-Syrian school movement should not be based solely upon this simple etymological link. A broader comparative and heuristic usage of this term, which is usually applied only to a particular intellectual movement in the West,[80] may shed light on the East-Syrian school movement.

In his book *Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism*, and later in the introduction to *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives*, José Ignacio Cabezón argues for the inclusion of scholasticism as an analytical category in the repertoire of scholarly heuristic tools.[81] He suggests that we may begin to define this category

loosely as containing certain characteristics: for example, a focus on tradition, rationalism, and an awareness of problems of language and hermeneutics.[82] While both East- and West-Syrian Christians developed some, if not all, of these characteristics in their centers of learning, the East-Syrian tradition in particular might be categorized as "scholastic," since, unlike the West Syrians, the East Syrians did not have a strong tradition of "secular" studies but rather incorporated the Greek literature they found more fully into their theological and exegetical system.[83] The *Cause* itself manifests many of the characteristics of scholasticism; the assimilation of material from the later Neoplatonists, who themselves have been described as "scholastic," could confirm this linkage.[84] Although I find Cabezón's category useful for characterizing what we find in the Church of the East, I am reluctant to cast this whole study as an examination of this cross-cultural phenomenon, especially according to Cabezón's particular delimitation of it; the reader herself may decide on the usefulness of this category.

Going beyond Cabezón's work, an examination of "scholasticism" among the East Syrians need not be centered on their intellectual practices alone. The East-Syrian school movement was a social phenomenon as well, that is, a way of life led by a group that identified itself and was identified by others as semi-distinct from the rest of the Church and from society as a whole. Thus, "scholasticism" may be reflected not only in the manner in which a group studies scripture but also in its whole way of life, from its members' dress and deportment to the type of institution they live in and the relations they have with outsiders. Inquiring into the social phenomenon of scholasticism does not preclude looking at intellectual developments; rather, it sets them within an institutional context. Social history can be distinguished from intellectual history when the elite sources of intellectual history derive from or represent different segments of society from those we find in the sources of social history. However, there is less risk that my project will conflate unrelated intellectual and social historical material, since intellectuals are the subject of this history. The study of intellectuals—aside from being solipsistic—is simpler because as a social group they are motivated, at least in part, by intellectual concerns. In other words, they take their books seriously and often act according to them.

Another characteristic by which we might define scholasticism, although perhaps not exclusive to it, is the existence of a fabricated origin and a history of scholarly practices that are retrojected into the past as well as projected into heaven. Just as the scholastics of Western Europe saw themselves as standing on the shoulders of giants (i.e., the Fathers of the Church), or as many European thinkers from the Renaissance onward took the Greeks and Romans as their fictional predecessors, the East

Syrians too invented a past upon which to found their intellectual endeavors. They, like the Rabbis who shared their milieu, attributed their own scholasticism to both God in heaven and the Biblical patriarchs of ages past.[85]

For example, the *Cause* presents a "scholastic" version of history by appropriating the "chain of transmission" ultimately derived from the historiography of the classical schools of philosophy and incorporating it into Christian historiography. While the *Cause* does not eradicate historical change or innovation completely in its formulation of chains of transmission (this would be contrary to the Antiochene exegetical tendency), it does stereotype the different figures of history: all historical figures, both the good and the bad, from Adam to Jesus and beyond, are understood in pedagogical terms. A comparison with contemporaneous Rabbinic material and with some of the slightly later Muslim sources would demonstrate the prevalence of this historiographical practice among intellectuals in the late antique Near East as a way of establishing an authoritative succession of tradition.[86] The comparison to the Rabbinic material is particularly apt, since the two traditions used some similar technical terminology and were working in comparable institutions of learning. Related to this use of the "chain" is the fact that both the East Syrians and the Rabbis project contemporary academic practices backward into the time of the Patriarchs.

Another important feature of East-Syrian scholasticism that coincides with other institutionalized forms of learning in the late antique and early Islamic periods is a tendency towards public debate. The evidence, especially that from the School of Seleucia and the School of Nisibis, suggests that East Syrians associated with the schools engaged in public debates with those outside the East-Syrian community, Christian and otherwise. The contents of some of their attested literary output tell us that training in one of the schools, especially when it entailed a higher degree of learning than simple literacy, was designed, or at least functioned, as a tool for intercreedal dispute. This would certainly help to explain the employment of Aristotelian logic in the schools.[87]

Finally, scholasticism is a useful rubric under which to understand the East-Syrian school movement because it suggests a culture where study and intellectual labor are not distinct from prayer and ritual. Study at the East-Syrian school was a *religious* act. Yet this claim needs to be qualified. The category "religious" loses some of its heuristic value in any analysis of premodernity. "Religion" is an anachronistic term for addressing antiquity because "religion" is constituted by the "secular"/"modern." We are talking about "religion" before "religion," and therefore statements about "religion" are not about a distinct sphere. They are rather statements about an integrated world where politics, economics, literature,

religion, and various other realms are neither completely distinct nor disembedded from one another. Although it may seem paradoxical, what made study at the East-Syrian school "religious" was this wholism as well as the rhetorical positioning of the sources, which draw a clear distinction between "the fear of God" (*deḥlat alāhā*) and the errors of idolatry, Judaism, and heresy.[88] Fear of the Lord, that is, being Christian, was literally only the beginning of wisdom.

In the last chapter of this book, as a contrast to the "scholastic" East-Syrian school movement, I examine another group within the Church of the East that seems at points to be in tension with the school movement. Monks in the East-Syrian "reform" monasteries, who under the influence of the writings of Evagrius of Pontus developed an epistemology allowing for easier access to the divine through both revelation in prayer and private reading of scripture and who rejected the close social life of the school, will serve as a foil for the school movement. A comparison of the two groups, that is, the members of the school movement and the "reform" monasteries, will aid us further in visualizing the school movement as a distinct phenomenon. The epistemological and hermeneutical differences between these two groups and the social tensions deriving from these differences are common to scripturally based religions. However, I will argue that they represent two steps in the larger East-Syrian system of socioreligious development.

Differences regarding the issue of authority in the interpretation of scripture are common to Jews, Muslims, and Christians. The type of conflict attested to in the East-Syrian sources—one between the monastic hermeneutic positing a more open access to the divine and the scholastic, more bookish reliance on reason and tradition—is apparent in Augustine's criticisms in the preface to his *De Doctrina Christiana.*

> A third class of critic consists of those who either interpret the divine scriptures quite correctly or think they do. Because they see, or at least believe, that they have gained their ability to expound the holy books without recourse to any rules of the kind that I have now undertaken to give, they will clamour that these rules are not needed by anybody, and that all worthwhile illumination of the difficulties of these texts can come by a special gift of God.[89]

It has been argued that Augustine is here specifically responding to the likes of John Cassian, a monastic writer who brought to the West the desert wisdom of Egypt and, more significantly, the Origenist philosophy of Evagrius.[90] This is comparable to the difference between the School movement and its monastic counterparts, who disliked what they saw as the schools' excessive reliance on the restrictive tools of language and rationality in their approach to God.[91] To apply the terms of another Syrian writer, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the difference between

the school movement and "reform" monasticism can be summed up as a tension between the kataphatic and apophatic theologies that each respectively developed by overlaying translated Greek material from the West onto the theology of Ephrem the Syrian, to whom both groups are heirs. The influence of Evagrius of Pontus further reinforced this tension.

As I stated above, intellectual groups take their ideas seriously and often act according to them. In relation to this we will see that the differing epistemologies of the school and the monastery correlate with their respective members' estimation of social interaction. The school, which emphasized tradition and a focus on language, required group study and prayer, while the monastery, which maintained a notion of the divine as more immediately accessible, downplayed the importance of, and even denigrated, group life. Thus, each had a mutually corresponding intellectual approach and view of the importance of social contact for the Christian elite.

The usual course of training, which ran from school to monastery, suggests a trend towards apophaticism and a concomitant subordination of the kataphatic to the apophatic, and this may correspond to similar developments in the larger Near Eastern and Mediterranean world. For example, Richard Lim has argued that the social problems caused by theological dispute in Late Antiquity provided an impetus for advocating apophaticism and an ideology of simplicity within the later Roman Empire.[92] Similarly, the East Syrians in this later period contained the *logos*, as Lim would put it, by subordinating social, public rationality to the private inspiration and authoritarian discipline of the monastery. However, at the same time, the school discipline required of a student prior to his entry into a private cell, as well as the social and physical location of the monastery, would have helped to tame the opposite, socially divisive tendency of freewheeling inspiration.

Daniel Boyarin has recently built on the work of Lim and others to argue that such a development can be seen in the Rabbinic sources. Boyarin suggests that the "fundamental discursive difference between the Palestinian (redacted fourth-century) and Babylonian (sixth-century) Talmuds" is "an instance of a wider epistemic shift taking place around the Mediterranean in the relevant centuries."[93] Boyarin characterizes this shift in the Rabbinic sources as a move towards the "virtually apophatic with respect to the divine mind, its text, and intentions for practice, as well."[94] This epistemic shift is related to the rabbis' invention of the Yavneh legend, which Boyarin compares to the revisionist understanding of the Council of Nicaea. The East-Syrian equivalent in this analogy would be the implementation of the canons of Nicaea in Seleucia under the auspices of Yazdgard I in 410, an event discussed by Lim.[95]

However, although my project is clearly related to the phenomena

examined by these scholars, in this book I am not looking at a shift in thinking which took place over a few centuries or an institutional attempt to control debate formally and limit the schismatic effects of rational thought. This may have happened for the East Syrians as well, but I am studying rather an epistemic shift the individual East-Syrian male would have experienced when, after being trained at an East-Syrian school, he entered the monastery. This shift reflects the socioinstitutional unfolding of a tension between the kataphatic and apophatic, a tension inherited from Ephrem of Nisibis and Evagrius of Pontus.

* * *

I hope that this book and the larger project of which it is a part will contribute to four fields that are too often treated as wholly distinct: Syriac studies, the study of the reception of Greek philosophy into Arabic, Rabbinics, and the study of Christianity in Late Antiquity. Within Syriac studies this book, aside from its obvious relevance to the study of the East-Syrian schools, and especially the School of the Persians in Edessa and the School of Nisibis, will also shed light on the development of an East-Syrian identity in the late Sasanian and early Islamic periods. Moreover, by looking at the schools this project will help to draw a better picture of the institutions in which East-Syrian exegesis was transmitted and created.

Syriac-speaking Christians were central to the early translation movement that rendered Greek texts into Arabic. In the long history of transmission by which Greek medical, philosophical, and scientific literature went from Greek into Arabic and then from Arabic into Latin and thus to the West, Syriac-speaking Christians played a disproportionately important role as early intermediaries. Soon the translation movement and creative intellectual work concomitant with it took on a rich and diverse life of its own, and the Arabic study of Greek philosophical texts went far beyond the study of these texts that we find among Syriac Christians in the sixth and seventh centuries. This has been largely recognized, but few people have looked at the cultural milieu out of which these earlier Syriac intellectuals came.[96] Scholars have considered it sufficient merely to recognize the Syriac Christian—especially West-Syrian—importance in this cultural transmission while tending not to focus on the sources for the very Syriac institutions and intellectual proclivities that in part made the early translation process possible. One problem has been the presupposition that the value attributed to classical learning is inherent and the same in all places at all times. However, we must come to terms with why Syriac-speaking people living in Mesopotamia in Late Antiquity chose to study the logical works of Aristotle.[97]

The study of the East-Syrian school movement may also help to clarify the elusive history of the development of the Rabbinic academies (*yeshivot*) and their literary correlative, the Babylonian Talmud, the cornerstone document of many Jewish communities of learning even to the present. East-Syrian schools are the only contemporary intellectual institutions in Mesopotamia immediately comparable to the Rabbinic academies. While some reference to the School of Nisibis has appeared in past scholarship and some mention has been made in more recent work, Shaye J. D. Cohen's 1981 comment is unfortunately still true: "A full comparative study of the school of Nisibis and the rabbinic academies of Babylonia is a desideratum."[98]

The failure to take up this challenge derives from the ideological closure that persists in some areas.[99] Many historians of Judaism and Christianity—who are mainly Jews and Christians themselves—continue to hold to a model of Jewish-Christian relations that posits a break between the two communities soon after the late first or early second centuries and a formal institutionalization of their differences that prevented any meaningful contact or interaction between them, aside from regular hostility and occasional influence. This model, which has been referred to as the "Parting of the Ways," too heavily prioritizes diachronic rupture and fails to take into account the numerous shared discourses that continued to exist between and within two communities occupying the same geographic and at times social space. This model has also affected scholarship on a practical level, in that it has led to the closure of individual fields of study (i.e., Syriacists are often Orientalists, while people who work on Rabbinics are in Jewish Studies). Abandoning the "Parting of the Ways" model will perhaps bring Syriacists and Rabbinics scholars together and will produce fresh insights into Jewish and Christian institutions of learning in Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period.[100]

Finally, this book fits within some of the broader, often more theoretical discussions in the scholarship on Christianity in Late Antiquity. My speculation about the East-Syrian culture of learning that developed in Late Antiquity belongs to the larger discussion of the cultural renegotiation that occurred with Christianization and the abundance of scholarship in recent years addressing the topic of Christianity as a new discursive formation. Taking an approach between one that sees Christianity as something radically new to the ancient world and one that sees Christianity, especially Christian intellectuals, as merely continuing the classical heritage, recent work, much of it ultimately looking back to Michel Foucault's project in the *History of Sexuality*—and of course even further back to Peter Brown's *The World of Late Antiquity*—has demonstrated that Christianity participated in and at the same time subverted the discourses of the ancient world.[101]

Much of the historiography on early Christianity and Late Antiquity focuses on how Christians received and transformed the physical and spiritual world of antiquity. For example, Judith Perkins examines how early Christians participated in the contemporary cultural milieu's notions of the self but performed a "representational revolution" in their privileging of the idea of the self as that which suffers.[102] Not surprisingly, at the same time that the suffering self was emphasized, Christians attempted to demonstrate that of all the sufferers, they suffered the most and the best. Thus, we see the formation of a discursive field in which Christians can form and prove themselves as subjects. The notion of the suffering self should not be seen as a mere ideological reflection of the fact that Christians were being persecuted, as a kind of palliative serving to justify Christian suffering, especially since even when martyrdom ended the idea of martyrdom continued as a form of self-presentation and self-understanding.[103] Symbolic systems affect and reflect reality but they do not necessarily draw their existence solely from the "real" world.

In contrast to the suffering self, my project examines "the learning self," that is, the Christian understanding of the self as an entity which learns. An understanding fundamental to the *Cause* and to much East-Syrian thought is that the human being exists in this world to learn about the Creator, creation itself serving to help in this endeavor. While such a notion of the self as an entity which learns has its predecessors in ancient thought, a new and particular type of Christian subject was developed and maintained, especially within East-Syrian institutions of learning. As I will argue in Chapter Nine, differences of opinion concerning the most appropriate approach and setting for learning about the divine led to tensions within the Church of the East and a commonly expressed antipathy toward the East-Syrian schools and academic practices among East-Syrian monks. The centrality of the pedagogical understanding of the Christian life which had so fully evolved within the Church of the East led to an occasionally contentious relationship between school and monastery, two institutions whose differences in pedagogy directly reflect their differences in epistemology and the estimation of social interaction.

Along with the reevaluation of the evidence for late antique institutions of learning—note my wariness of using the term "education," which has certain implications not present in the ancient system—this book is an attempt to examine learning as not merely an intellectual exercise performed by one half of the Platonic/Cartesian human being. The slipperiness of the term "school" should not cause us to misrecognize ancient learning as equivalent to the "education" that is supposed to occur in our own contemporary schools, especially since modern education is often closely tied to the larger secularizing project of modernity.

East-Syrian learning had a cosmic significance, inasmuch as the students were understood to be imitating the study practices of the angels. Learning was embodied through ritualized study, heavy institutionalization, and the marking of the East-Syrian "schoolman" (*eskōlāyā*) as a distinct social entity. At the School of Nisibis *homo discens* submitted both his mind and his body to the authority of his masters and the larger institution: learning was a form of devotion performed in the body.

* * *

The structure of this book, a large part of which will focus on the late sixth-century *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, is as follows. The *Cause* and the East-Syrian school movement as a whole engage in an ongoing Christian tendency, particularly in the Syriac milieu, to "scholasticize" Christianity, that is, to understand Christian belief and practice in pedagogical terms. Chapter One will examine this tendency as well as the related motif, found in several texts, of conversion to Christianity as a kind of pedagogical conversion.

Chapters Two and Three reassess the history of the School of the Persians in Edessa. Scholars have traditionally taken the School of Nisibis to be an immediate and direct descendant of the School of the Persians. However, Chapter Two offers a critical reading of the sources for the School of the Persians and suggests that we know far less about this institution than was previously thought. Chapter Three then places the evidence that we do have for the School of the Persians in a better framework, one appropriate to and plausible within fifth-century Edessene life. In Chapter Four we finally turn to the School of Nisibis. This chapter sets out the evidence for the foundation and daily life of the School as well as its curriculum.

Chapters Five through Seven address the intellectual life of the School by closely examing the *Cause*. Chapter Five addresses the genre of the *Cause* as exemplary of the academic practice and ideology of the School of Nisibis. The genre of the text is especially important, because if the origins of the School are being addressed in a genre associated with the explication of the Christian liturgical cycle, then this would suggest that the school year was seen as part of the holy calendar and therefore that study itself was, to a certain extent, a form of liturgy. The next two chapters, Six and Seven, address the intellectual pedigree of the School of Nisibis by closely analyzing the contents of the *Cause* and placing it within its larger context. Chapter Six demonstrates the dependence of the *Cause* on a sixth-century version of the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia attested not only in the Church of the East but in Western Greek and Latin writers as well. Chapter Seven closely analyzes the

Neoplatonic version of Aristotelian logic that crept into the Church of the East from the early sixth century onward and how the *Cause* employs such material to maintain a natural theology reminiscent of the work of the fourth-century Ephrem of Nisibis and Evagrius of Pontus.

Finally, in the last two chapters, the School itself is recontextualized, and it and the East-Syrian school movement as a whole are placed within the broader spectrum of East-Syrian monasticism. Chapter Eight provides a survey of evidence for the different types of East-Syrian schools in late antique and early Islamic Mesopotamia. Chapter Nine argues that although institutions like the School of Nisibis cannot be understood outside the rise of monasticism, institutional and intellectual differences existed within the Church of the East that resulted in the schools' development into entities semi-distinct from East-Syrian monasteries. This chapter ends with a discussion of the apparent decline of the School of Nisibis in the early seventh century and its possible connection to the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene, the head of the School at the time.

I conclude this book by speculating about the embodied practice that the intellectual and socioinstitutional life reflected in the sources entails, a practice that is not only reflected in the *Cause* but also evoked and maintained by such texts. As is emphasized in much of this book, the scholastic way of life consists of more than just intellectual endeavor; it also requires a notion of study as religious practice.

*Chapter 1*

# Divine Pedagogy and the Transmission of the Knowledge of God: The Discursive Background of the School Movement

Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old. (Mt 13:52)

Thoughtful Christians will concede that, although theology has an essential function, theological discourse does not necessarily depend on a clear-cut conception of the cosmic framework on the part of a religious actor. Discourse involved in practice is not the same as that involved in speaking about practice. It is a modern idea that a practitioner cannot know how to live religiously without being able to articulate knowledge.[1]

A pedagogical understanding of the human being's place in the world is apparent throughout East-Syrian literature. A feature of the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* that strikes the reader immediately is its schematization of all human history into a long series of schools. Such a set of metaphors and motifs corresponds to the East-Syrian school movement as an underlying ideology that would have maintained and been maintained by the social institutions of the schools.[2] However, while this pedagogical ideology was perpetuated through, for example, the School of Nisibis by its various rules and its community life, its origins lie outside the East-Syrian schools. It may seem counter-intuitive, but I would argue that what might be referred to as the pedagogical model was in existence before there were actual Syriac schools, and that in time the model was reinforced and found a easier fit within the East-Syrian school movement. In other words, Syriac Christians were talking about schools *before* they existed, and it was only later that, in a sense, the metaphor became reality. To be sure, this pedagogical model was not static. It developed and was transformed at the same time as the institutions it both affected and reflected.[3]

In a sense, certain aspects of the East-Syrian pedagogical understanding of Christianity were always there in potential in various receptacles such

as tradition and Christian literature. When the conditions of theology, economics, and monastic development, for example, were right, this seed took root. The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the background of this pedagogical model and demonstrate how it was employed in understanding conversion to Christianity.

## Pedagogical Imagery in the Syriac Milieu

A pedagogical ideology existed within Christianity from the very beginning. Early Christians borrowed ways of talking about themselves from the institutional discourses of the Greco-Roman world. Christianity could be characterized variously as a new nation (*éthnos*) or polity (*polīteîa*), a kind of family, the "true" Israel, or a school among the many philosophies of the day.[4] Even in the first century, Philo and Josephus describe Judaism as a having "schools of thought (Gr. *hairéseis*),"[5] and the Gospels present Jesus and his followers as a teacher (rabbi) and his students (disciples).[6] Christian discipleship was metaphorically and concretely a pedagogical relationship, something easily lost in the all too familiar term "disciple." This pedagogical notion is readily apparent exegetically already in second-temple Jewish literature. For example, regarding Adam's naming of the animals, Philo writes:

> So Moses says that God brought all the animals to Adam, wishing to see what appellations he would assign to them severally. Not that He was in any doubt—for to God nothing is unknown—but because He knew that He had formed in mortal man the natural ability to reason of his own motion, that so He Himself might have no share in faulty action. No, He was putting man to the test, as a teacher does a pupil, kindling his innate capacity, and calling on him to put forth some faculty of his own.[7]

Numerous examples can be provided from the second-temple Jewish background to this material. In negotiating a comfortable relationship with the dominant Hellenistic culture of which it was part, second-temple Jewish culture had to find a fit with *paideia*, that is, the traditional Greek and later Roman form of forming elite adult males, and *paideia* in turn would affect Jewish cultural self-understanding. Early Christians took up many of the techniques of dealing with cultural difference that second-temple Jewish intellectuals had already developed, such as the subversive reversal and elevation implicit in the notion of "barbarian wisdom," which can be found in the Christian idea that Greek culture and learning could be trumped by the simple philosophy of Aramaic-speaking fishermen. Furthermore, from early on, the Jesus movement set itself up as a counter to the so-called wisdom of this world (e.g., 1 Cor 1–2).

The pedagogical model is present in the Christian appropriation of

the term *haíresis* (originally meaning "school of thought") from the ancient classroom to talk about those who were theologically aberrant.[8] This model is also apparent in the fact that many ecclesiastical documents were referred to as "teaching."[9] At times this pedagogical model reflected the actual social reality of the writers of the documents in which it appears. For example, Christian Greek writers of the second and third centuries, such as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, were engaged in intellectual activity in the mold of ancient philosophers and so understood Christianity in pedagogical terms.[10] Their peers, the so-called Gnostics, such as Valentinus, also maintained study circles and at the same time a notion of Jesus as instructor.[11] David Brakke has suggested that one of the great shifts in ecclesial models was the changeover from an "academic" Christianity to a "catholic" Christianity in the fourth century under Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.[12] Furthermore, this pedagogical understanding of Christianity was part of the immense project of accommodating classical culture in which Christian intellectuals from Clement of Alexandria to Basil of Caesarea were engaged. Thus, by the time of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who will be addressed in more detail in a later chapter, casting God in the role of pedagogue would have seemed a natural thing to do.

The earliest Syriac sources attest to an understanding of Christianity as a form of learning.[13] This is apparent explicitly in the imagery that is often employed in the sources, but also implicitly in the understanding of the human being's relationship with God as imitative. Thus the strong emphasis on the imitation of Christ in some of the earliest Syriac literature, including the famous twin motif in texts such as the *Acts of Thomas*, corresponds with the pedagogical model. Self-identification with the bridegroom, such as we find in the line from Aphrahat's sixth *Demonstration* from the mid-fourth century ("The solitary [*īḥīdāyā*] from the bosom of his father gives pleasure to all the solitaries [*īḥīdāyē*]"[14]), is analogous to the mimetic understanding of learning common in antiquity.

Some of the earliest explicit examples in Syriac literature of the tendency to employ pedagogical terms can be found in the Peshitta. Simple instances are provided by the common use of the word *yullphānā*, meaning "learning" or "teaching," and a number of other cognate words based on the same Syriac root, which serve as key pedagogical terms in later texts, such as the *Cause*. While many of these usages are not particularly striking, some certainly would have been suggestive to a reader with a mind for pedagogy. For example, in Exodus 18 Jethro warns Moses that he is going to wear himself out resolving all the disputes of the people. In the middle of Jethro's advice to Moses, the Hebrew text reads, "You should represent the people before God" (Ex 18:19),[15] while the Peshitta has, "You, be a teacher to the people from God."

Michael Weitzman has argued that the corruption of the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Peshitta version of Chronicles compelled the translator(s) of this text "to guess and so reveal his attitudes."[16] Weitzman relies on this Syriac version of Chronicles in his attempt to resolve the question of the origins of the Peshitta, whether Jewish or Christian. Following Weitzman's method, we might also look at pedagogical terminology in the Peshitta of Chronicles.There are a number of examples where the translator has added pedagogical terminology.[17]

1 Chr 5:12[18]
MT Joel the chief, Shapham the second, Jannai, and Shaphat in Bashan . . .
P Joel went out at their head, and he was judging them and teaching them the scriptures well.

1 Chr 22:13
MT . . . the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord commanded Moses for Israel.
P . . . the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord commanded Moses *to teach* Israel.

2 Chr 30:3[19]
MT For they could not keep it at its proper time because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem.
P For they could not keep it at its proper time because the priests had not sanctified themselves, nor had *the teachers of* the people gathered unto Jerusalem.

2 Chr 34:22[20]
MT So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to the prophet Huldah, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (who lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect.
P So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to the prophet Huldah, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (lit. vessels), and she was sitting in Jerusalem *in teaching*, and they spoke with her in accordance with the king's commandment.

This last example is especially interesting because not only does the translator, following the targum, read the unvocalized manuscript's *mišneh*, the "second" quarter of the city, as *mišnah* (Syriac rendering: *yullphānā*), but by doing so he shifts the meaning of *y-t-b*, the Syriac equivalent of the

Hebrew root *y-š-b* (lit. "to sit," translated here as "to live"), to its later technical sense, found in both Hebrew and Syriac, of "to sit in study" (i.e., as in Hebrew *yešībah*).[21] Although Chronicles was not part of the East-Syrian canon, these examples demonstrate the predisposition of the culture in which the Peshitta was produced.

Other renderings in the Peshitta text of the Hebrew Bible show the same tendency as the above quotations and would later have affected how the biblical narrative was understood. Twice in 1 Kings Elijah's "servant" (Hebr. *na'ar*, lit. "young boy"; LXX *paidárion*) is translated as his "student" (Syr. *talmīdā*). This change is repeated in four references to Elisha's "servant" Gehazi in 2 Kings.[22] The Hebrew *na'ar* is used over ten times in 1 Kings and over twenty times in 2 Kings; thus, these changes show a particular interpretation of the relationship between Elijah and Elisha and between Elisha and Gehazi. Furthermore, putting these two relationships together would suggest an ongoing pedagogical succession: Elijah taught Elisha and Elisha taught Gehazi. The Peshitta version would have made it easier for the author of the *Cause* to imagine a "school" of prophets in the wilderness, as he does.[23]

It should also be noted that certain aspects of scripture that might lose their meaning in a Western context, or rather take on a more exotic feel, could maintain their original valence in a Syriac milieu. For example, in Mt 23:8 ("But you are not to be called Rabbi, for your teacher is one, and you are all brothers") the word for "teacher" in the original Greek version is *didáskalos*, which is translated as *rabbā* in the Syriac (i.e., *rabbkōn*). The original Palestinian sense of this line from the Gospel is maintained because of the linguistic and cultural continuity of the Syriac milieu with first-century Palestine.

Along with the Peshitta, the works of Ephrem of Nisibis demonstrate the early development of certain pedagogical conceptions. They also served as ideological and literary models for later Syriac writers. The conception of God as pedagogically guiding creation to knowledge of God himself is ubiquitous in Ephrem's works.[24] In his introductory volume to Ephrem, Sebastian Brock describes what he calls "the three modes of divine self-revelation" by which the Creator bridges the chasm between himself and his creation.[25]

> We can isolate three main ways by which Ephrem understands this process of divine self-revelation to take place: through types and symbols which are present in both Nature and Scripture; through "names," or metaphors, which God allows to be used of himself in Scripture; and above all of course in the Incarnation.[26]

Ephrem's thinking is much broader than the simple and direct use of pedagogical imagery and metaphors in the *Cause* and other texts, but significantly it serves as an underlying model for the relationship between

the human being and God that is found over and over again in the sources. Throughout his works, Ephrem shows a constant concern for how we can know God without limiting the divine essence. For example, the fifth of his *Hymns on Paradise*—Ephrem's meditation on both the text of Gen 2–3 and the very experience of reading that text—provides a clear delineation of his notion of nature and scripture and the parallel function of the two as ways of revealing the divine.[27] A humorous passage from the *Hymns on Faith* (in which Ephrem compares God's relationship to the human being to a person trying to teach a parrot to speak while hiding behind a mirror) demonstrates the two common themes of divine pedagogy and God's use of metaphors and a "garment of names" to communicate with us.[28] Learning itself can be hypostasized in Ephrem's works, as in the fifth *Sermon on Faith*, where the personification of learning is reminiscent of that of Wisdom in Hebrew scripture.[29] The unstated assumption in this particular text is that ultimately there is only one object of learning: God. However, since he cannot be known in himself, "learning" immediately unfolds into numerous realms and their constituent sciences.

Along with Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ephrem was a figure of the utmost authority for later Syriac Christians. Even despite the concerns that some held about his theological ambiguity, many parts of his works found their way into Syriac liturgical collections.[30] Many of the underlying ideas about epistemology in his texts can be seen in a more developed form in later Syriac literature. When the "modes of divine self-revelation," that is, "types and symbols which are present in both Nature and Scripture," and the "'names,' or metaphors, which God allows to be used of himself in Scripture,"[31] were qualified and condensed, a more explicitly defined, pedagogical and scripturally based system came into focus. For example, the idea that types and symbols are present in nature and scripture would eventually be institutionalized in a school setting where the close exegetical study of scripture and the transmission of this knowledge would occur. Furthermore, Ephrem's emphasis on the importance of silence, that is, the recognition of those aspects of the divine about which we cannot speculate, would play a part in later apophatic theology.[32]

By the late fourth century the project of translating Greek patristic literature into Syriac had begun. Like other translation corpora from antiquity, the history of the translation from Greek into Syriac goes from loose, receptor-language oriented renderings to consistent, source-language oriented, word-for-word translations.[33] Thus, as with the Peshitta, early translations reveal much about the assumptions and tendencies of the culture in which they were produced. For example, in the Syriac version of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, translated perhaps in the late fourth century,[34] indigenous Syrian terminology creeps into the text of

Book II, where Eusebius uses Philo's account of the Therapeutae (*De Vita Contemplativa*) as evidence for early Christian monasticism. Words associated with early Syriac asceticism such as *īḥīdāyā* and *qaddīšūtā* replace more familiar Greek words. However, the translator also imports pedagogical terminology into the Syriac version; for example, he uses the terms "ones who have become pupils" (*mettalmdīn*) for "acquaintances" (*gnṓrimoi*); "instruction, discipleship" (*tulmādā*) for "the race" (*tò génos*); and "learning, doctrine" (*yullphānā*) for "way of life" (*polīteîa*).[35] Thus, early on and prior to the translation of patristic works promoting a pedagogical version of Christianity, most notably those of Theodore of Mopsuestia, there had already been both the idea of God as pedagogue and the understanding of Christianity as as a form of learning in the Syriac milieu.

Examples of pedagogical imagery abound in the Syriac writers of the fifth and early sixth centuries. In the early fifth century John of Apamea, in the introduction to the first *Dialogue on the Soul*, writes, "as it is man alone that God wanted to train by the teaching of his wisdom, he has set up all of nature."[36] The *Teaching of Addai* (*Doctrina Addai*), a text which received its final redaction in the fifth century (an earlier version of which Eusebius himself used in the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk 1), employs legal and scribal metaphors to describe the perfect world of the eschaton.[37] In the early sixth century, Philoxenus of Mabbug begins his eighth homily with a portrayal of Jesus as a teacher.[38] The pedagogical model is a commonplace in the writings of Jacob of Sarug. For example, in his letter to Stephen bar Sudaili, the purported author of the *Book of the Holy Hierotheos* (to be discussed in a later chapter), Jacob refers to Jesus in a long theological exhortation as "the great scribe (*sāphrā rabbā*)" who "came down from heaven and became a teacher to the world and creation was illuminated with his teaching."[39]

Jacob's fourth homily (*mēmrā*) against the Jews, entitled by its editor "De la pédagogie divine," describes the progressive revelation of the Son by the Father to the world. For Jacob, the scribal office entails instruction of students. The collection begins with an invocation to God: "Oh skilled[40] scribe (*sāphrā mhīrā*), be for me a master (*rabbā*) full of wisdoms, / and I will be full of understanding for your word as a student (*talmīdā*)."[41] In the seventh homily he draws a striking metaphor with the cross: "The cross was a scribe for the world and from it (the world) learned / to worship the Father in spirit in all places."[42] Such metaphors may derive from the fact that here Jacob is writing against the Jews, the wicked scribes in the New Testament, who in late antique Edessa and its environs may have continued to have a scribal appearance (though due to a lack of evidence we do not know exactly how similar the Jews of Edessa were in this respect to their contemporaries in the South, i.e., Palestine and Babylonia).

The expression Jacob uses for God, "skilled scribe," is worth further analysis. It is employed to describe the different heads of the School of Nisibis in a partially extant homily (*mēmrā*) that was apparently produced at the School.[43] The origins of the expression may be biblical. It shows up twice in the Hebrew Bible: at Ezra 7:6 ("He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was upon him." NRSV) and metaphorically at Ps 45:2 ("I address my verse to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe." NRSV) The Peshitta of the former has "wise scribe" (*sāphrā hakkīmā*); the Peshitta of the latter has the Syriac equivalent (*sāphrā mhīrā*). From the verses following Jacob's use of this expression it is clear he is writing with Ps 45 in mind (line 5 "My tongue is your pen, now write with it true things"). However, the new context of these lines provides a new meaning. Both uses of the "skilled scribe" in the Hebrew Bible refer to the scribe at the side of a king. However, for Jacob it is God who is the scribe and the scribe is associated with an institution of learning; he has students, which fits with the usage of the expression to describe the heads of the School of Nisibis. Perhaps Jacob is not relying solely on Ps 45 for this expression; perhaps it was extant from the scribal culture that had previously existed in the Aramaic milieu, which would help explain his use of it here. This previous scribal culture may, in part, explain the scribal practices contemporary to Jacob. Sebastian Brock has noted that Syriac scribes seem to be more self-conscious than their Greek counterparts.[44] For example, in the mid-third-century Syriac parchments from Dura-Europos and its environs the Syriac scribes regularly identify themselves, while in the Greek documents they do not.[45] Likewise, we know that a number of early dated manuscripts come from Edessa specifically because the scribes felt the urge to tell us so.[46] In early manuscripts scribes often give their names, some specifying themselves as an "Edessene scribe," even if the manuscript was not produced in Edessa![47]

The use of scribal metaphors in Jacob's poetry also fits with Jacob's use of imagery reflecting the formal transmission of knowledge. The underlying pedagogical understanding of God found in Jacob's fourth homily against the Jews becomes explicit in an extended metaphor in which God is compared to a schoolmaster who teaches students little by little.

A scribe also does not first give full writing
To the child to read, but he trains him in all the syllables.
From the letters he begins to write and show him
And by the vocalizing (*hegyānā*) of words (lit. names=nouns) he causes him to ascend.
And when he is full-grown to read beautifully, thus he gives him
A great book in which is found all wisdoms.
Also God who is the scribe of human beings
Little by little he caused them to ascend to perfection.[48]

The basis of Jacob's metaphor seems to be the regular practice in antiquity for teaching children how to read, which, despite some differences between the Semitic writing system and that of Latin and Greek (i.e., a lack of vowel notation), can be better understood from the classical sources.[49] The complexity of Jacob's metaphor corresponds to the development of more formal "schools" typical of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Thus the pedagogical imagery is more closely related to an environment of Christian "schools," as is the case with the *Cause.* Whereas Ephrem spoke about instruction and learning in general Jacob uses more concrete terms: pens, books, and ink, the actual implements of Edessene learning.

As I will argue in Chapter Seven with regard to the East-Syrian usage of a Neoplatonic version of Aristotle, cultural appropriation runs along previously existing paths. The importation of new ideas and practices is often mapped onto older systems. The Syriac Christian tendency to employ pedagogical language may reflect a prior Aramaic scribal culture. Note the ancient usage of the scribal epithet "skilled (*mhīrā*)" above. In further analysis, the evidence of this prior scribal culture may help to illuminate why Syriac school culture developed in the way it did. The language of the various texts translated into Syriac (the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and Greek patristic literature) may not sufficiently explain the origins of the pedagogical notions I have examined so far. Rather, perhaps we can see in this imagery one instance of where Christianization and the new literacy it brought failed to obscure the indigenous culture of the region. The pedagogical model can therefore be placed within the larger framework of scholarly ideologies and representations we find in the ancient and Greco-Roman Near East.[50] Other instances of the ancient Mesopotamian background of Syriac Christianity have been noted. Brock cites as an example the expression, often used by Ephrem (and others), *sam ḥayyē* ("medicine of life"), which derives from an earlier Akkadian term.[51] Another example is provided by the popular Syriac genre of the "dispute poem," which is based upon ancient Mesopotamian precedents.[52]

The scribe as religious figure had already had a long history in Mesopotamia; the Babylonian patron of scribes, Nebo (Nabu), remained a popular deity even in Late Antiquity.[53] That he was son of the main god, Marduk-Bel, makes for an analogy between him and Jesus the pedagogue son of God, especially since "as a divine scribe Nebo is the inventor of script and the holder of the tablets of destiny, of divine laws valid for everybody."[54] The common belief in a god typically depicted with a stylus in hand suggests that the developing scribal form of Christianity did not require a complete reformulation of the local religious imagination to seem plausible. And of course we should recall the popularity

of the story and sayings of that representative of ancient Near Eastern scribal wisdom, Aḥiqar, the earliest Christian version of which is the Syriac one.[55]

## Conversion to Christianity as the Rejection of One Form of Learning for Another

> The early biographers of Christian saints wrote in the context of this conflict between a tradition emphasizing the rejection of worldly learning and the purity of the ideal Christian, on the one hand, and the need, not only to accommodate literacy in the Church, but even to create forms for and enhance the value of learning and culture in an established Church, on the other.[56]

The latter tendency to displace worldly learning with a new ecclesiastical culture is typical of the Syriac hagiographical texts, in which flight from worldly learning is not to the life of a simple lay Christian, but rather to that of the learned ascetic. Although the pedagogical aspects of the transformation into an ascetic—both learning from an ascetic and subsequently teaching as one—are common to hagiography from its origins onward,[57] it plays a more significant role in Syriac literature than in other forms of Christian literature.

The Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd cycle from the *Acts of the Persian Martyrs* offers an excellent example of the pedagogical understanding of Christianity in the Syriac milieu, particularly the idea of conversion to Christianity as a rejection of one form of learning and the acceptance of another. The *Acts of the Persian Martyrs*[58] are a diverse group of texts; however, those from the first couple of centuries of composition are less sophisticated than the later *Acts*, e.g., Bābai the Great's *Life of George* as well as his *Life of Gregory*, and Western Syriac hagiographies such as the *Life of John of Tella* (to be discussed below). The language of the early *Acts* is often a simple Syriac prose, in contrast to more learned and esoteric Syriac philosophical and theological literature, and we may assume that their meaning was readily apparent to a larger number of people, if the genre followed its assumed function as texts to be read to congregations on martyrs' festivals and at holy places. This makes the *Acts* better representatives of the views commonly held within the Church of the East, since such stories would be heard by youths who would one day participate in the school movement.

The Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd cycle describes the Christianization of the Zoroastrian upper class through several generations, up to the persecution (ca. 446–448) under the Sasanian king Yazdgard II, who ruled in 438–457.[59] In summary form the story is as follows: Mihryār, a Zoroastrian, has two sons, Yazdīn and Dādgushnasp. The first flees his Zoroastrian

education and eventually becomes a monk. After decades he returns, converts his brother, and takes his nephew, Pethion, as a disciple. Some years later Pethion heals Ānāhīd, who converts to Christianity, followed by her father, Ādurhormizd, who is martyred. Ānāhīd then meets the same fate.[60] The cycle concludes with the martyrdom of Pethion.

This text offers an excellent example of the matter-of-fact usage of pedagogical language in Syriac lives of saints. In fact, it might be argued that it sets Christianity up as a form of learning alternative to Zoroastrianism. One of Mihryār's virtues described at the beginning of the text is his great learning in Zoroastrian religious knowledge.[61] Learning is a central issue in the description of Yazdīn's flight as a youth from the Zoroastrian school.

> And not long after the youths grew up, one of them, whose name was Yazdīn, was given by his father, Mihryār, to a magian school (*bēt mgūšē*) that he might learn and become wise in the magian learning (*yullphānā da-mgūšūtā*) and that he might be skilled (*mhīrā*) and wise in the murmuring[62] of the magi. But after Yazdīn was at the school (*bēt yullphānā*) [or: in learning] among the magi for a few days, he left the school of the magi (*bēt yullphānhōn da-mgūšē*), fled, and came to the house of his foster parents.[63]

Yazdīn's flight is then announced to his family by the priest to whom he had been handed over. After a long search he is discovered and beaten severely by Mihryār. He is sent back to the school but again flees, and his father finally gives up on him. Yazdīn's brother, Dādgushnasp, is sent to school instead, while Yazdīn is allowed to remain with his foster parents, with whom he regularly visits church. There he becomes acquainted with the lections (*qeryānā da-ktābē qaddīšē*)[64] and the liturgy. Yazdīn eventually runs off, gets baptized, and becomes a monk, at which point "he learned also the psalms and to read the holy scriptures."[65]

Pethion's conversion and discipleship under Yazdīn is described in pedagogical terms. "He became a student to him and Pethion would also cling to Yazdīn. He learned from him the psalms and the holy scriptures. He would imitate his ways and the excellence of his master (*rabbēh*)."[66] The two together become a "blessed pair (*zawgā*)."[67] Their "wonderful and great instruction (*tulmādā*)"[68] spreads throughout the land. After Yazdīn's death, Pethion continues to benefit "non-Christians" (lit. "outsiders," *barrāyē*) with his "instruction" (*tulmādā*).[69] Ādurhormizd puts his trust in the "learning of the magi" (*yullphānā da-mgūšē*),[70] but they, as well as the Jews and the Manichees, cannot help when his daughter is ill. Once Ānāhīd is healed, "When [Pethion] instructed and taught her, our Lord opened her heart to receive his teaching pleasantly."[71] With the conversion of his daughter, Ādurhormizd himself also submits to Pethion's teaching.[72]

The news of Ādurhormizd's conversion spreads quickly, and his fellow

magi confront him about it. When verbal and physical persuasion fail, the shah sends Ādurfrazgard, "who is exalted in their learning and renowned in their religion [lit. "fear"], that he might come and teach, instruct, and turn [Ādurhormizd] to their worship."[73] A great assembly is present at the debate between Ādurhormizd and Ādurfrazgard.[74] Much of their discussion centers around Zoroastrian myth: Ādurhormizd, as well as the author of this text, is certainly knowledgeable of the system he condemns. Zoriastrianism is a form of "learning"[75] to be contrasted with Christianity. At the end of the debate, Ādurhormizd says, "I wonder at you that while you are with the learning (*yullphānēh*) of Satan, you rashly name the straight faith of the fear of God the learning of Satan."[76] Later, in prison, Ādurhormizd turns to Jesus, who among other things "judged me worthy that I might be named by the name of his discipleship (*talmīdūtēh*)."[77] After his martyrdom, the body of Ādurhormizd is brought back to the hut of Pethion, "where he had become a disciple (*ettalmad*) and was baptized."[78]

The narrative then returns to Ānāhīd,[79] who, soon after setting up her own hut near Pethion's in order to lead an ascetic life, is sought by the same magi responsible for her father's death. When the horsemen sent to find Ānāhīd enter her hut, they find her praying. Part of her prayer repeats the story of the original knowledge of God and decline into idolatry found in Romans 1:18–32, a passage important for Christian natural theology.

> Mighty God who existed before the world did, establisher, provisioner, and guide of all that is in it; you gave to human beings intelligence and a discerning mind more than to any other corporeal creature, . . . but when they went astray from knowledge of you and strayed from your dominion, erring after all sorts of evil idols, you did not act toward them as their wickedness deserved, but instead you sent your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Power who issues from you, the image of your divinity, and through your life-giving illumination he gathered them together, leading them away from all sorts of idols and false beliefs into a knowledge of you; through the grace of the Spirit given in baptism you made them worthy of illumination and heavenly glory, and you held me worthy, too, Lord, . . . for you brought me into the blessed sheepfold of your flock, into the sacred fold of your sheep, by means of the watchful and true shepherd, Mār Pethion, the teacher whom you provided in your grace. Now, Lord, that I have become aware of the way of your dominion and the path to salvation, and know how to travel along them towards those treasures of yours in heaven, . . .[80]

Although the sentiments of Ānāhīd's prayer are not uncommon, they take on a greater significance when juxtaposed with the strong focus on teaching, learning, and knowledge already seen in the text as well as the emphasis on knowledge of God in Romans 1:18–32, the passage on which it is based. Ānāhīd traces a cycle from the original human knowledge of God to humans straying from this knowledge and finally to the return

of this knowledge through Jesus Christ. She fits herself into this cycle by way of her relationship with Pethion, her "teacher."[81] Like her father, when confronted with her apostasy from the religion of her birth, Ānāhīd is capable of providing a learned critique of Zoroastrianism. Also like her father, after a lot of talk, she is martyred.

The text then finally returns to Pethion, the instigator of the last several dozen pages of trouble. The magi begin to complain about him as "the destroyer of our learning" who is giving them a bad name before the king, who is "zealous for our learning."[82] Pethion is arrested (and in fact converts those who arrest him) and thrown in jail. In a debate with his accuser who, as in other parts of this text as well as in the Persian Martyr Acts as whole, refers to Christians as "sorcerers (*ḥarrāšē*)," he claims:

> I am not, as you say, a sorcerer and one who misleads Christians, but you magi are sorcerers and misleaders of human beings, far from the knowledge of God, but I myself am a teacher of the knowledge of God.[83]

After several instances of miraculous protection, including the bonds falling off him and his fellow inmates (and his convincing them to stay in jail nonetheless!), the magi are infuriated and Pethion is slowly dismembered, day by day, with a prayer given after each mutilation, until he is finally beheaded. There is no pedagogical language through this whole section. Finally, in the author's summation of his life, Pethion is called "a teacher of truth" thrice,[84] his "instruction" is mentioned thrice,[85] his making of disciples twice,[86] his "spiritual learning" twice,[87] and "the knowledge of the Messiah he offered."[88]

The Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd cycle consists of a series of rejections of upper class Sasanian society and the religious learning expected of its youth. Despite the miraculous power of his prayer both in healing Ānāhīd and in his protection through various trials, Pethion is most significantly a learned figure who is able to teach Ānāhīd and her father, both of whom are depicted as knowledgeable in the religion of the magi. While some texts such as the *History of Mār Qardagh* depict the upper-class Christian convert from Zoroastrianism as previously excelling in the traditional virtues of Persian society, such as archery, polo, and hunting,[89] the Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd cycle depicts Persian sub-elites of a more learned taste, those who would receive a priestly training, and in the end draws a parallel between Christianity and Zoroastrianism as two forms of learning in order to demonstrate the superiority of the one over the other. This superiority consists not only of the content of the learning, but also of its truth and, more significantly, its capacity for being upheld in debate. Both Ādurhormizd and Ānāhīd can out-argue their interlocutors, whether the subject be the true God of Christianity or the falsehood of Zoroastrian myth.

The cycle's motif of rejection/conversion is common to late antique hagiography. It is a central part of the Christian literary attempt to create boundaries with the surrounding culture and of the production of a discourse which casts Christianity as something new and different.[90] However, just as conversion to Christianity often entailed a conversion to a specifically ascetic form of the religion, so also, as we shall see in the following texts, casting the acceptance of Christianity as the taking up of an alternative form of learning is especially common in the Syriac milieu.

The near-contemporary *Life of John of Tella* and *Life of Mār Abā,* both of which describe the lives and persecution of distinguished churchmen of the sixth century, prove that the rejection of traditional elite learning and the acceptance of a new form of *paideia* was a Syriac Christian theme on both sides of the border dividing Persia from Rome. John of Tella, born in Callinicum (modern ar-Raqqah), became the Miaphysite bishop of Tella/Constantina/Constantia (modern Viranshehir) in 519, but was removed by Justin in 521. He visited Constantinople in 533 and was imprisoned by the Neochalcedonian Ephrem, patriarch of Antioch (529–44), from 537 until his death in 538.[91] He may be best known for ordaining John of Amid (modern Diyarbakir), the church historian more commonly known as John of Ephesus. Mār Abā, after his conversion to Christianity, went to the School of Nisibis, traveled to the West (where he most notably influenced the Greek author known as Cosmas Indicopleustes), and eventually became Catholicos of the Church of the East, only to spend most of his Catholicate (c. 540–52) in prison, until his death in 552.[92]

The *Life of John of Tella* was apparently composed soon after 542.[93] It provides the story of John's rejection of an elite Greek form of learning in tandem with his gradual withdrawal into the ascetic way of life. His family, particularly his widowed and pious mother,

> were training him in the literature (*sephrā*) and wisdom of the Greeks, and when he was twenty years old, they put him in the service of the *praetorium* of the *dux* of that same city, that he might be trained and instructed, so they thought.[94] He was clothed in desirable garments according to the rank of his service, and different sturdy foods were prepared for him with all care; he was not extravagant or indulgent, and they handed him over to a tutor (Gr. *paidagōgós*) to guide him.[95]

John's mother's good intention is to find him a suitable wife, but he, a blameless "man of God" from his youth, aspires to something greater. John flees his home and lives with a local monk, but his mother comes and drags him home, asking him:

> Are you not able to please God also when you are in the world in the same manner that so-and-so and so-and-so have pleased him, although they were in the world and masters of riches?[96]

John acknowledges that some individuals can bifurcate their allegiance, rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's, but that this is not possible for him. The text continues:

> One day he took up the book containing the story of the blessed Thekla, who became a disciple (*ettalmdat*) to the blessed Apostle, and he read from it.[97]

In a like manner, John then takes up the Apostle Paul's writings and reads.

> When at that point he became a disciple (*ettalmad*) in truth to the blessed Apostle, like the blessed Thekla, he built for himself within his chamber a small upper room and he was continually in it. He and his tutor alone made a pact between themselves that his mother would not know his thought or the deed he was doing. He refrained from eating flesh and from drinking wine, and his meals the tutor would eat. From eventide to late in the evening he would eat only dry bread, and later he would take a taste of something once every two days. When no one had yet perceived the secret that was between them and when he would sit to enjoy the meals which were ascending to this holy man at evening time, as the tutor would narrate it before us, the blessed one would stand and bend as doubled up like a hook with his hands bound behind him and the hair of his head would rest upon the ground. He would wait thus until deep in the evening. Then he would cast himself upon the ground and lie down for a little bit. He also learned the psalms in Syriac and the two of them would perform the liturgy, because his tutor also learned the psalms with him. When his mother, worthy of blessings, saw that the color of her son's face and the radiance of his youth had changed, she began to ask his tutor, "What is this intention which I see in my son that he is wholly in sadness?" He said to her in order to please her with his speech, "It is because he was up late in much reading." She was pleased by this because he would—so she thought[98]—be instructed in the reading of the pagan Greek writers (lit. the reading of the outsiders).[99]

John continues in this way and is encouraged to be tonsured both by the holy men he meets outside the city and by the holy scriptures (lit. *qeryānē qaddīšē*).[100] Finally, to his mother's chagrin, John follows his ambitions: he divides his wealth and finds a spiritual father and becomes his "student" (*talmīdēh*).[101] Under him John remains continually in prayer, fasting, vigils, and the reading (*qeryānē*)[102] of the holy scriptures.

*The Story of the Wonderful and Divine Struggles of the Holy Mār Abā,* composed sometime in the late sixth century, describes the life and martyrdom of Mār Abā, the East-Syrian Catholicos (died 552).[103] Despite the significance of the final office Abā attains, the preface of the work emphasizes his role as a "teacher."[104] The story begins before his conversion to Christianity, when Mār Abā "exceeded many pagans in his paganism."[105] Since he was "trained in Persian letters and literature (*sephrā*)"[106] and was a sharp-witted young Zoroastrian, Abā caught the eye of local officials

and embarked on a career in the imperial bureaucracy. Being a pagan, Abā naturally despised Christians—that is, until the day when Jesus decided to "spread his net upon him."[107]

When he was going to cross from the town of Ḥālē to his ancestral homeland (lit. the land of his fathers), he was sitting with others in a little boat in order to cross the Tigris. Jesus had sent a teacher of the schools (lit. "a schoolman, a teacher"; *eskōlāyā ḥad mallphānā*), a man poor and ascetic, gentle and humble, whose attire (*eskēmaw*[*hy*]) was modest and chaste.[108]

This schoolman (*eskōlāyā*) gets into the boat with the other passengers and

After the holy man (Abā) saw his attire and thought that he was a monk (*bar qyāmā*), he hit him and took his bag, which was with him, and threw it onto the dry land. He forced him to get up out of the boat. The schoolman (*eskōlāyā*) did not give a response to these things, but got up out of the boat and was sitting at the edge of the Tigris.[109]

The boat starts to cross the river, but when it reaches the open water the wind and waves become rough, tossing the boat about. The frightened passengers return to land and the schoolman (*eskōlāyā*) tries to get into the boat, but is again ejected by Abā. The boat fails to cross the river and must return a second time. The passengers disembark and Abā, curious about the schoolman's (*eskōlāyā*) odd attire, strikes up a conversation with him. Amazed at the wisdom and humility of the schoolman, Abā decides to "make himself a disciple (*nettalmad*) to the household of Christ."[110] He begins to fast and pray continually, and soon must give up his scribal profession when his employer finds out about his conversion and threatens to report him to the authorities, who have banned the conversion of Zoroastrians to Christianity. Abā leaves and is baptized, thus giving up his "letters and his work."[111] He decides to go to the wilderness where he might please God. However, at this point the story continues:

After he went up and arrived at the city of Nisibis, he entered the holy school there and the study (*'enyān*) of the divine books was loved by him more than all his life. And he learned (the psalms of) David in a few days and began meditation on the divine books.[112]

Abā thrives at the School, while still finding time to go to the countryside and silence heretics with his learning. He then leaves for Alexandria, to visit holy sites and to dispute with a certain Sergius (probably Sergius of Rēš'aynā), but on his way he stops in Edessa, where he meets his future disciple, Thomas, from whom he learns Greek. The two of them visit Alexandria, Athens, Corinth, Constantinople, and Antioch, and in each place Abā amazes people with his teaching as well as his miracles. In Athens

he turns people away from worldly learning, while in Corinth, a group of sophists are so awed by Abā's teaching that they immediately burn all their "silly" books.[113]

On his way home to Nisibis highwaymen approach Abā, and without resistance he offers them his one possession, a learned scroll. In this brief anecdote, we see the integration of the three virtues of patience, poverty, and learning. Abā now resembles the schoolman (*eskōlāyā*) whom he mistreated on the banks of the Tigris. The story of Mār Abā's early life is one of conversion to an ascetic and "scholastic" form of Christianity as well as an explicit rejection of the traditional Persian and Greek forms of learning. What most impresses Abā about the schoolman (*eskōlāyā*) whom he meets on the banks of the Tigris is not his fancy speculation or theology but rather his humble deportment and asceticism. In sum, for the author of the *Life of Mār Abā,* the school movement provides not just an intellectual approach, but also a way of life.[114]

In contrast to Mār Abā, John of Tella is raised by a Christian mother and given an education in "the letters and wisdom of the Greeks" so that he may have a career in the "praetorium" of the "dux." John rejects this learning, preferring *ascesis* and scripture. The text represents John's rejection of one form of learning and the status it led to for another.[115] It is significant that John converts to a form of Christianity (monasticism), while Mār Abā converts to Christianity as such. A key element behind both these narratives is the life "in the world" to which the traditional form of learning leads. The rejection of such learning is also the rejection of a public career and all the social distinctions and relations it entails.

The *Life of John* tries to apologize for his mother's obstructing his attempts at leading a holy life and for her trying to marry him off.[116] This is necessary because the text must negotiate between elevating the holy life and not completely disparaging Christian life "in the world." John and the author of his life lived in a thoroughly Christian society. Furthermore, the monks of John's world were more engaged with, and often had a background in, classical and Christian Greek learning. In contrast, Mār Abā's biographer perhaps came from the capital of the Persian Empire, Seleucia-Ctesiphon, far from the classical culture of the Mediterranean and the majority Christian society of the Roman Empire.[117] In Abā's life the flight to the monastery, so common in late antique literature, becomes the flight to the School of Nisibis.

## Conclusion

The pedagogical model, that is, the understanding of Christianity as a form of learning to be transmitted from master to student, a form of learning that ultimately derives from and concerns God himself, is the

linchpin holding together the intellectual and social historical realms to be examined in the following chapters. It provides the broader discursive space in which more complex theology and pedagogical speculation took place. As the second epigraph for this chapter suggests, we must distinguish between the practical knowledge of Christianity as understood in pedagogical terms from the more complex theoretical and theological knowledge that one might arrive at by following the calling of Christ within an institution of learning.

The former type of knowledge entails a family of terminology and imagery that might occur to anyone engaged with the Christian tradition. Syriac Christians of this period would have been confronted on an ongoing basis with the pedagogical model through regular church attendance and Christian fellowship. Jesus was understood as a teacher, and discipleship was then taken in the literal sense of the word (i.e., "talmīdā" *means* "student"). The mimetic imperative in many of Jesus' and Paul's statements was similar to the age-old exhortations, both ancient Near Eastern and Greek, emphasizing the importance of imitation in the transmission of knowledge. Furthermore, a broader theology of divine pedagogy would be imprinted on a Christian from the Syriac liturgical and homiletical tradition.

In contrast to the informal knowledge of the pedagogical model, formal theological knowledge was an erudite system of thought requiring participation in the pedagogical tradition of the School. For example, this would entail the "scholastic" version of history presented by the *Cause*, a theology and an anthropology of divine pedagogy from the study of Theodore of Mopsuestia's works, and perhaps some knowledge of Aristotle's logical works and their commentarial tradition. The *Cause*, as we shall see, represents both these forms of knowledge, that is, the pedagogical model and the theology of divine *paideia*. This is what makes it an appropriate introductory speech for newcomers to the School. It leads the audience through some of the intricacies of the School's theology while employing a pedagogical language that would have been familiar to any Syriac listener.

Christianity has derived from scripture and tradition clusters of metaphors which have allowed Christians at different times and in different places to define for themselves the essence of Christianity and herald it to others. This panoply of images, metaphors, and expressions was continually adapted to fit the needs and circumstances of any particular locale.[118] The pedagogical model of Christianity, as discussed in this chapter, is one of these clusters. Furthermore, as we will see in later chapters, this cluster of pedagogical metaphors was reduced and lost its metaphorical valence with the development of the East-Syrian school movement; Christianity for certain East-Syrian elite males *was* literally a

form of pedagogy with its own institutions and way of life. This led to the development of a whole social group who could be imagined as such. For example, the third canon of the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon of 585/6 addresses the special relationship between students and masters, comparing it to that of a father and his son as well as to God's paternal and didactic relationship with human beings.[119] The Catholicos at the time of this council was Īšōʿyahb I (582–95/6), who had been head of the School from 565 to 568. This canon, therefore, may serve as evidence for how, although the pedagogical model had its own distinct origins prior to the rise of the Schools, in these new conditions it affected and reflected the real-world institutions established for the transmission of knowledge.

A parallel example of this phenomenon may be found in metaphors of Christian militarism. Although certain military language was always present in the tradition, only at certain times do actual social organizations such as the Salvation Army, and movements such as the Crusades, develop, reflecting and reinforcing the original metaphorical, linguistic cluster of the *milites Christi* (the soldiers of Christ). More recently, a number of American soldiers, prior to the siege of Falluja, were baptized while listening to homilies on David prevailing over the Philistines. David as military man and David as metaphor for grace and submission to divine will are thus collapsed, and warriors for God become simply soldiers. Similarly, ideas of Christian discipleship and following Christ found in the earliest Christian documents proved an important ideological background to the development of monasticism, a phenomenon which in turn had a strong influence on the school movement.

*Chapter 2*

# The School of the Persians (Part 1): Rereading the Sources

The pedagogical model became the dominant form of imagining Christianity at the School of Nisibis and within the East-Syrian school movement due to the evolution of a specific institutional structure in which metaphors of learning could be reduced to their concrete equivalents and Christianity could be equated with the transmission of knowledge. However, we must step back from the time of Mār Abā in the sixth century and examine the institutional predecessor to the School of Nisibis, the School of the Persians in Edessa, which was closed in 489 due to its aberrant Christological teaching. Its members—or at least Narsai and perhaps several others—left Edessa, modern Urfa, and traveled eastward several hundred kilometers until they crossed the border and exited the Roman Empire, arriving at Nisibis. This emigration from Roman space was a reversal of an earlier migration of Syriac Christians from Nisibis to Edessa after the death of Julian the Apostate in 363, when Nisibis was ceded to the Persians. The flight of Christians to Edessa in the late fourth century seems to have infused the city with the skills and learning of the Nisibene Christian community, exemplified by the master Syriac poet, Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373), who spent the last ten years of his life in Edessa. Similarly, the flight from Edessa in 489 resulted in Nisibis becoming the foremost intellectual center of the Church of the East for at least the next century.

The School of the Persians in Edessa is essential for understanding the institutional background to the School of Nisibis. The evidence for this school needs to be reassessed and placed in a more historically accurate framework than has been employed by previous scholars. This chapter and the following one will examine the origins of the School of Nisibis insofar as they derive from the School of the Persians in Edessa. This chapter lays out the evidence for the School and addresses the historiographical problems that have come about due to both ancient and modern authors' tendency to project the sixth-century School of Nisibis and the controversy surrounding it onto fifth-century Edessa.

A reassessment of each of the sources may seem tedious, but it is

needed because scholarship on or referring to the School of the Persians has been plagued by three main problems. The first of these is a failure to place the evidence into a plausible framework that fits our knowledge of education (or transmission of knowledge, to use a less anachronistic term) in the ancient world. This problem stems ultimately from the unfortunate cognate relationship between our word "school" (or the French "école" or the German "Schule") and the Greek word "scholḗ" and the Syriac and Latin loan words, "eskōlē" and "schola." I will not here go into the origins of the word "scholḗ," so let it suffice to say that although by Late Antiquity this ancient Greek word meaning "leisure" had taken on various meanings, in matters of learning it generally was used to refer to the activity of learning and the milieu in which that activity took place.[1] This is in contrast to the modern usage of the word, which usually entails a corporate structure with a set of courses arranged around a formalized curriculum.[2] Scholarship on the School of the Persians has tended to ignore these distinctions and to understand "school" in our modern sense of the word.

Examples abound. The secondary literature refers to the School of the Persians and the School of Nisibis as theological academies, exegetical schools, or even schools for missionaries. Its head is described as a principal, a head lecturer, director, or administrator.[3] Teachers there are described as lecturers and a curriculum is spoken of. Similar language is used in discussions of the School of Nisibis; for example, the School is described as having a "medical faculty" because the study of medicine is said to have been appended to the School in the sixth century.[4] I myself use some of these terms in this study, but their usage must always be qualified in order to prevent misunderstandings arising from the anachronistic projection I mentioned before. Similar problems can be seen in the scholarship on the catechetical School of Alexandria.[5]

The next problem with the secondary literature is that it generally overlooks the full significance of the fact that many sources for the School refer to it as the "School of the Persians" and not as the "School of Edessa." Scholars, however, regularly refer to this institution, whatever it was, as the "School of Edessa." Some of the scholarship has gone so far as to see the School of the Persians as a part of some broader School of Edessa. For example, in his 1995 essay "The School of Edessa: Greek Learning and Local Culture," Han J. W. Drijvers presents a discussion of the School of Edessa *before* the rise of School of the Persians.[6]

Drijvers is certainly correct that Edessa was a center of learning from the second century onward. For example, we read in Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History* (III.6) of Eusebius of Emesa (d. 359) being trained in scripture and then Greek learning there. However, the phenomenon which Drijvers is describing, that is, the continuity of elite intellectual culture

in an urban center, does not require the name "school." Rome was an intellectual center, and so was Apamea, but we do not refer to the Schools of Rome and Apamea. Drijvers, as previous scholars have done, takes the term "School of Edessa" from the discussion of the School of the Persians and applies it to an earlier period.[7] The use of the term "school" here is chronologically and categorically ambiguous and potentially misleading. In contrast, I would argue that, considering the paucity of evidence for the School, we should take more seriously the implications of the ethnic portion of its name, "of the Persians," and not treat this as a mere epiphenomenon of the influx of Persians into the city, or as something nonessential for understanding what kind of institution it was.

The third problem with the way scholars have approached the sources for the School of the Persians has been a failure to keep in mind the polemical context in which these literary sources were composed. Scholars have read these sources uncritically, cutting and pasting the evidence according to their needs and failing to employ a systematic approach to the material. With one exception, all references to the School of the Persians are dated after its closure in 489. An obvious fact, which has unfortunately been ignored by most of the previous scholarship, must be stated: the authors of the various sources for the School of the Persians were not interested in preserving a historically accurate picture of the School, but rather wrote in response to the ecclesiastical events and partisan politics of their own day. The apologetic and/or polemical goals of each source must be identified before we can begin to glean historical data from them. Unfortunately, as will be demonstrated below, I have found that the sources contain less trustworthy information concerning the School of the Persians than a simple glance at them would suggest.

In fact, in analyzing the sources for the School of the Persians we must remain aware of their retrospective bias. With the exception of the Acts of the second Council of Ephesus of 449, all the sources for the School of the Persians come from after several events which would have certainly affected how they depict the School. Of these events, the Council of Chalcedon of 451 and the actual closure of the School in 489 would have been the most significant.

The East Syrians had a mixed reaction to Chalcedon, in contrast to their complete rejection of both Councils of Ephesus (431, 449). In fact, some of the canons of Chalcedon were being transmitted in East-Syrian circles by the sixth century.[8] This is not surprising, since in various ways Chalcedon could be construed as supporting the East-Syrian cause. First, it overturned the blatantly Miaphysite Council of Ephesus of 449 by reinstating figures such as Theodoret and Ibas, while chastising Dioscorus for his extreme actions. Second, the Christological statement of Chalcedon, "in two natures," which infuriated the Miaphysites, was acceptable to

East Syrians. However, East-Syrian sources often show no interest at all in Chalcedon. For example, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā, written outside the Roman Empire and thus beyond the jurisdiction of Constantinople, makes no mention of the Councils of 449 or 451.[9]

The Miaphysites, on the other hand, would spend the decades following Chalcedon attempting to overturn its decisions. In examining Chalcedon and its effects we should not allow our hindsight perspective to affect our understanding of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. It was not until the reigns of Justin and Justinian that open persecution against Miaphysites began (518), at which point figures such as Jacob Baradaeus (d. 578) and John of Ephesus (d. 589) began to engage themselves in the creation of a separate Miaphysite ecclesiastical structure.[10] Before this point, and even after, Miaphysites looked to the emperor as an arbiter and aimed to win their cause through theological and rhetorical persuasion. The parting of the ways whereby a separate West-Syrian church structure developed took a long time and may not have been complete until the Islamic period.

Miaphysite hopes were reasonable. Since the Council of Ephesus of 449 had been overturned and the authority of other lesser councils of the past diminished, they could hope to see Chalcedon removed from the books. Furthermore, certain emperors showed signs of a willingness to do just this. Zeno's *Henotikon* of 482 was clearly an attempt at bringing Chalcedonians and Miaphysites together. It is in this context as well that we should see the closure of the School of the Persians under Zeno. The emperor Anastasius (491–518) was openly pro-Miaphysite. Furthermore, even after the persecution of Miaphysites had begun, they looked to imperial power for support. Justinian's empress, Theodora, was a known supporter of the Miaphysite cause, and Justinian himself did not seem to mind that John of Ephesus was a Miaphysite when he commissioned him to convert the pagans of Asia Minor to Christianity.

The Miaphysite dependence on the emperor to "do the right thing" can be seen in their construal of the events around and after Chalcedon. With the exception of the East Syrians and others not living under the Roman Empire, few Christians in the late Roman world could resist the tempting yet theodically challenging ideology of Caesaropapism. The long period of post-Chalcedonian ambiguity during the reigns of Zeno (474–91) and Anastasius (491–518), before Justin reasserted Chalcedonian orthodoxy in 518, would have given the Miaphysites reason to believe they would eventually get their way. Thus they were bent on using persuasion and at times would find excuses for the errors of the monarch.[11] The Miaphysites' belief that they would have their way helps to explain the abundance of literary propaganda they produced in support of their cause.

The closure of the School of the Persians in 489 for being a stronghold of Nestorianism would also have affected the various sources for the School that were composed after this date. In reality, the theology of the School in the mid-fifth century, if it even had a distinctive theology, was not necessarily equivalent to a later East-Syrian one, even if Antiochene writers, such as Diodore of Tarsus, were read there. All the sources project their understanding of the School as defined by its closure and by its being the predecessor of the "Nestorian" School of Nisibis back onto the School of the fifth century. All sides would be complicit in this falsification: the predecessor of the School of Nisibis would be reviled by West Syrians and lauded by East Syrians.

Another event which would affect the historical understanding of the School was the Miaphysite condemnation of Ibas, the bishop of Edessa (d. 457). In some of the sources, such as the *Chronicle of Arbela*, the condemnation and death of Ibas and the closure of the School are conflated. This will be discussed below in regard to Ibas's *Letter to Mari*, which was one of the documents condemned as one of the Three Chapters at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553.

Finally, it should be added that in the period between the closure of the School of the Persians and the later references to it, the area of Edessa, as well as the whole march between the Roman and Persian Empires, was devastated by plague and the Persian War of 502–6. Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite details the breakdown of civic life in Edessa and its environs as a result of this double disaster,[12] which would have made memories of past events and institutions even more tenuous.

In presenting an alternative reading of the sources for the School of the Persians, I occasionally make reference to previous scholars' opinions, but due to limitations of space I cannot fully cite all the places I find authors' arguments to be lacking.[13] Before beginning my reassessment it will be helpful here to set out some of the commonly held opinions concerning the School that I would like to question. A standard view of the secondary literature can be summarized as follows. The School of the Persians was a part of a broader School of Edessa. The ethnic appellation "of the Persians" may be relevant to the origins of the School, but it does not have *continuing* significance through the fifth century. Ibas, Bishop of Edessa (435–457), taught at the School and was even its head.[14] Greek philosophical texts, particularly the logical works of Aristotle, were studied there.[15] The School was connected to the "Nestorian" cause from early on, even during the time of the bishops Rabbula and Ibas (412–435, 435–457).[16] The School had a corporate semi-monastic structure like the School of Nisibis,[17] and these two institutions were in immediate continuity with one another.[18]

## The Sources

In reassessing the sources for the School I will analyze them in chronological order and according to provenance (West-Syrian, Constantinopolitan, and East-Syrian). The quality of a source should not always be based upon its temporal proximity to that which it describes, but it is important to lay out a chronology because it will help to demonstrate how the *story*, or myth, of the School of the Persians developed over time. Such an analysis, although methodologically necessary, may be ignored without loss by readers concerned primarily with the general flow of my argument. I would suggest that those not interested in detailed comments on the sources skip ahead to the following chapter.

Following are the main sources in chronological order, along with their approximate dates of composition. Aside from the earliest one (listed first), I have labeled them as West-Syrian (=W), East-Syrian (=E), and Constantinopolitan (=C).

- The Acts of the second Council of Ephesus or the "Latrocinium" Council of 449 (preserved by West Syrians)
- Closure of the School of the Persians in 489[19]
- The letter of Simeon of Bēt Aršam (505–c. 540)—W
- Letter XIV of Jacob of Sarug (510–21)—W
- Theodore Anagnostes (after 518 and perhaps even later)—C
- Interpolation in the *Life of Alexander Akoimetes* (mid-sixth century)—C
- Chronicle of Edessa—The author was "[a] Chalcedonian with 'Nestorian' leanings, writing in Edessa soon after 540"[20]
- John of Ephesus (566–68)—W
- *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā (third quarter of the sixth century)—E
- *The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* (c. 600)—E
- Proem to the *Statutes of the School of Nisibis* (602)—E
- Chronicle of Arbela (date uncertain, perhaps from mid-sixth century, but could also be a modern forgery)—E
- Chronicle of Siirt (9th or 10th century)—E
- Chronicle of Michael the Syrian (late 12th century)—W

Although the Acts of the "Latrocinium" Council of 449 serve as the earliest attestation to the School, the analysis of this text will be put off until the beginning of the next chapter. Rather I will now discuss the post-closure sources for the School of the Persians and demonstrate how the failure to read these sources in light of the polemical context of their composition and the literary practices of the time has led to the development within the secondary literature of a false reconstructed history and

understanding of the School. To highlight my argument, I will focus on one particular issue: the secondary literature's oft-cited claim that Ibas, the Bishop of Edessa from 439 to 457 (minus a temporary removal in 449–51), was a major figure in the School, even the "headmaster" there for some time.[21] The treatment of the figure of Ibas by the primary and the secondary literature is a good example of the kind of problems I find in both the sources for the School of the Persians and the secondary literature relying on those sources.

## The West-Syrian Sources and Miaphysite Propaganda

As stated above, the Miaphysite sources for the School of the Persians must be understood within the context of Miaphysite attempts to overturn the decisions of Chalcedon. While Miaphysites were responding to and in competition with the "Nestorians," their anti-Nestorian statements must also be understood as intended for a Chalcedonian Orthodox audience. Attacks on "Nestorians" were indirectly attacks on Chalcedon itself, especially since the "two natures" doctrine of Chalcedon was "Nestorian" in the eyes of the Miaphysites. Furthermore, Chalcedonians had more power and were thus far more of a threat to Miaphysites than the East Syrians, whose center of power was slowly shifting outside the Roman Empire (as well as to the Latin West). The earliest source for the School, the Acts of the "Latrocinium" Council of Ephesus in 449, preserved by the West Syrians, will be discussed in the next chapter because it stands out as the only source composed *before* the closure of the School in 489.

The earliest Miaphysite source, one that has had an exceptional influence on the scholarly reconstruction of the School of the Persians, is a letter by Simeon of Bēt Aršam. Simeon, the Syrian Orthodox bishop of Bēt Aršam (near the Tigris, not far from Seleucia-Ctesiphon), acquired his nickname, "The Disputer," from his successful debates with East Syrians, most notably his supposed victory over the East-Syrian Catholicos Bābai, after which Simeon received his own bishopric (between 497 and 502/3).[22] Living among East Syrians in Persian territory as well as traveling throughout the beleaguered Miaphysite world, Simeon would have had to hone his skills in theological persuasion. He has left us two works.

One, which comes down to us in different recensions, treats the persecution of Christians by the Jewish king of the Himyarites, Dhu Nuwas;[23] the other describes the spread of the "Nestorian" heresy to the East.[24] The second of these texts, the one of interest to us here, is difficult to date. Setting it around the time of the former document dates it to c. 520 (it often appears in the secondary literature with no speculative exact date).[25] The reference it contains to Anastasius (491–518)[26] may suggest a date before 518, but judging from Simeon's selective depiction of

events he could just as well be ignoring the new anti-Miaphysite regimes of Justin and Justinian. The East-Syrian Catholicos, Bābai, seems to be dead, making 502/3 a terminus post quem.[27] Philoxenus of Mabbug may be dead, thus placing the letter after 523.[28] The latest prosopographical reference for Simeon is that he was in Constantinople sometime before the death of the Empress Theodora in 548.

Simeon's letter has been used in the past as a straightforward historical source for the Schools of the Persians and of Nisibis, as well as for the dissemination of "Nestorianism" in the Sasanian Empire. Thus, it is important to examine closely the text and the history it purports to be presenting of the origins of "Nestorianism." It begins by stating that "the error of the Nestorians began from Hannan and Caiphas, the high priests, with the rest of the Jews."[29] Simeon then explains that the Jews of Jesus's day debated about his nature, but all agreed that he was a mere man. "It is this same opinion which is passed down (*metyabblā*) among the Nestorians until today."[30] At first, this passage seems to be merely reiterating the common slur uttered against the Nestorians, i.e., that they were Jews, since according to their enemies they denied the divinity of Christ. However, Simeon then describes an actual chain of transmission connecting the Nestorians directly by intellectual descent to the Jews.

> Now Simon Magus (*Ḥarrāšā*) received (*qabbel*) (this teaching) from the Jews . . . he opposed the apostles in Rome . . . and he thought that he himself was the Messiah, just as he had received (it) from Hannan and Caiphas, his companions and masters (*rabbānaw(hy)*). From Simon Ebion received (it) and from Ebion Artemon received (it) and from him Paul of Samosata.[31]

Simeon then describes Paul and how "the heresy of the two natures was demonstrated" by him. "From Paul Diodore of Tarsus received (it) . . . From Diodore Theodore of Mopsuestia received (it)."[32] Theodore presented a "Jewish opinion" in the exegesis, which he had learned from his "masters" (*rabbānaw(hy)*).[33] "From Theodore Nestorius received (it)."[34] Nestorius then publicly declared this heresy in order that it might receive his name! "From Nestorius Theodoret of Cyrrhus received (it)"[35] "From Theodoret Ibas received (it)."

> From Ibas someone whose name was Mari from Bēt Hardašīr received (it). From there the land of the Persians began to be harmed by Nestorianism through the letters of Ibas, the interpretations of homilies (*mēmrē*) and the commentaries (*torgāmē*) of his masters.

This is the same Mari of Ibas's *Letter to Mari*, a text which had become a focal point of Miaphysite dispute at the time. Ibas's letter was originally produced as evidence against him at Ephesus in 449. After his exoneration at Chalcedon in 451, the condemnation of this letter became a rallying

point for Miaphysites. It would eventually be condemned as one of the Three Chapters in the Council of Constantinople of 553, part of Justinian's attempt to appease the Miaphysites.

The exact identity of Mari is still not clear, nor is it certain how much more Simeon knew about him. Contrary to the traditional acceptance of Simeon's account as a source, Van Esbroeck has argued that "Mari the Persian was archimandrite of the convent of the *Akoimetoi* on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus 15 miles north of Constantinople."[36] Simeon and other sources clearly knew very little, if anything, about him except his place of origin ("Bēt Hardašīr"). Perhaps Simeon's knowledge of Mari, or rather, even his idea of fitting this Mari into his chain of heresy, only came from what he extrapolated from some written source, perhaps the "Latrocinium" Acts of 449, and from what he knew about him from Ibas's letter.[37] We know there was confusion about the identity of Mari even in antiquity.[38] Mari's connection to the sleepless monks of Constantinople, the *Akoímetoi*, will help to explain the origins of the passage on the "schools" in the *Life of Alexander the Sleepless* below.

Perhaps Ibas's letter is in fact the very reason why Ibas himself appears in Simeon's letter. We know very little about Ibas and only recently has anyone devoted close study to him.[39] Our ignorance concerning him may be due to the lack of interest that later writers had in his biographical details. While during his lifetime his letter to Mari was produced to condemn him, decades later he and his letter became a focal point for anti-Chalcedonian ire. By condemning his letter, Miaphysites were condemning the Council that exonerated him. By Simeon's time the letter was no longer just a way to attack the person: it had attained greater significance to the Miaphysites as a symbol of the errors of Chalcedon.

Simeon continues:

> And after Mari a presbyter (*qaššīšā*) from Edessa whose name was Mārūn 'Elītā[40] received (it) from Ibas. He was a scribe (*sāphrā*) of the school (*eskōlē*) of the Persians, which was in the city of Edessa at that time. And there were in the school of Edessa at that time (those) who were Persians of whom these are some of them (*w-hāwēn hwaw b-eskōlē d'urhāy b-zabnā d-pārsāyē d-ītayhōn menhōn hālēn*).[41]

Note the two different appellations used for the school in this passage. A list then follows of those Persians who held opinions similar to Ibas (*bnay tarʿītēh d-īhībā*).[42] Simeon maligns each of them with epithets. These include Barṣaumā and Narsai (whom he also refers to as "the Leper"). After this Simeon lists those who did not agree with Ibas, including Philoxenus of Mabbug (d. 523).

The above passage is the earliest piece of evidence connecting Ibas to the School of the Persians. However, the connection is thin. The text only states that a scribe at the School of the Persians received his heretical

doctrine from Ibas, and this is in the context of a long list of obviously fictional successions.

Simeon continues:

> After the death of Ibas all the Persians were expelled (*etṭred(w)*) from Edessa with the rest of the Edessene writers who were in agreement with them, and through the diligence of the blessed Mār Qūrā, Bishop of Edessa, and by the commandment of Zeno, the emperor of the Romans, the school in which the Persians were learning in Edessa was uprooted (*et'aqrat*) and in its place a temple in the name of mistress Mary the *Theotokos* (*yāldat alāhā*) was built.[43]

Simeon then describes how those who were expelled went into Persia and became bishops there and "Narsai the leprous was a teacher in Nisibis."[44] Note that there is no mention of the founding of the School of Nisibis. Rather, Simeon seems perhaps to agree with the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā and the *Chronicle of Siirt*, which mention a school existing prior to Narsai's flight.[45] The list provided by Simeon of those who left Edessa after the closure of the School is misleading: there are figures on it who certainly left before 489.[46]

Significantly, Simeon's abbreviated account seems to conflate the death of Ibas in 457 with the closing of the School of the Persians in 489. The apparent simultaneity of the two events has been used to suggest Ibas's connection to the School and has been reinforced by the late, and questionable, *Chronicle of Arbela* (see below). This has led to much confusion, and scholars have made various attempts to resolve this dating quandary, even going so far as to suggest that the School of the Persians was closed twice.[47]

Simeon's letter belongs to a whole corpus of Miaphysite literature from the late fifth and early sixth centuries that served as propaganda against "Nestorianism" and what was regarded as its covert twin brother, Chalcedonianism. This corpus consists of a variety of different works written in different genres.[48] These works include the *Florilegium Antechalcedonium* (a Greek collection of the fifth century);[49] Timothy Aelurus's pedantic part-by-part critique of the *Tome* of Leo;[50] a fictitious letter of the Jews to the emperor Marcian asking that Jews no longer be harassed since they are in accord with Chalcedonian Christology (i.e., that Christ was human);[51] the anti-life tradition of Nestorius;[52] the *Plerophories* of John Rufus, a large collection of visions and prophecies against Chalcedon and its supporters, which derives from certain Palestinian circles;[53] and others.[54]

Many of the works of Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug would fit into this group of texts. Of particular interest to the examination of Simeon's letter are the instances where Severus of Antioch and Philoxenus of Mabbug provide a similar genealogy for "Nestorianism."

The idea that there was a succession from the time of Jesus to the present of those who would deny the divinity of Christ is not original to Simeon. Besides being related to the general heresiological tendency to create heretical chains of transmission mirroring the apostolic succession and to the practices of texts like Mishnah Tractate *Avot*, Simeon's letter relies on a specific chain of transmission that shows up in the writings of Severus and Philoxenus.[55] De Halleux went through the different sources for this fictitious genealogy and suggested that it derives from circles in Edessa.[56] He later edited Philoxenus's second letter to the monasteries of Bēt Gaugal, part of which presents this genealogy of "Nestorianism."[57] While this letter shows some similarities to Simeon's in its occasional use of pedagogical language,[58] overall it tends to use vegetal language for the spread of "Nestorianism."[59]

Simeon uses a distinctive pedagogical language, e.g., the repeated use of *qabbel* with an assumed direct object (as we find in Mishnah *Avot*).[60] Through the use of certain technical terminology deriving from Greek diadochic tradition, Simeon has created a continuous heretical chain of transmission from the time of Jesus to his own day. Scholars have too often read Simeon's letter without the caution that his false genealogy ought to inspire. There is little reason to think that Simeon starts to tell the truth when his narrative reaches the fifth century or that the connections he makes between certain fifth-century figures should be taken at face value. The diadochic language of Simeon's letter is similar to the chains of tranmission used in a more positive sence within the East-Syrian *Cause*, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Scholars at times take the connections Simeon makes even further by smoothing out the rough edges of his chain. For example, Simeon does not explicitly connect Ibas to the School of the Persians, nor does he say that Narsai founded the School of Nisibis. Beyond this, his reconstruction has often been accepted as an objective account of the so-called "Nestorianization" of the Church of the East. Only recently have scholars questioned this historical paradigm whereby the Church of the East became "Nestorian" due to the influx of refugees from the West. We must keep in mind that the polemical context in which Simeon was writing compelled him to explain how "Nestorianism" arrived in Persia: we would not expect him to say that the Church of the East had always had certain underlying theological ties to traditional Antiochene theology. In sum, Simeon's letter is not as accurate or useful a source as it has been traditionally regarded within the secondary literature. He and the other Miaphysite sources have an agenda in their descriptions of events of the recent and not-so-recent past, and many of the problems that arise in using his letter as a source also appear when we examine other sources for the School of the Persians.

Jacob of Sarug's Letter XIV is one of our earliest references to the School and its closure and is often taken as evidence that he studied in the School of the Persians. In this letter to "the saints of Bēt Mār Abbas," Jacob describes how certain monks came to him and asked him if he had anathematized Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia. According to his letter, Jacob readily replied.

> Because of this I am informing Your Modesty that forty-five years ago, when I was *sitting* in the readings of the divine scriptures in the city of Edessa, (and) at that very time the books of the wicked Diodore were being translated from Greek into Syriac, and there was in the city a school of Persians (*eskōlē d-pārsāyē*) who held the teaching of the foolish Diodore with much love. And by that school all of the East was harmed. This (school) by the diligence of him who is worthy of good memory, Mār Qūrā, Bishop of Edessa, and by the command of the faithful emperor Zeno, was uprooted from the city. Then at the same time that those wicked books were being translated from Greek to Syriac, I was as a child who is in need of learning. I came across one of these books of Diodore and I found it full of all ambiguities and all thoughts, which are quite far from the truth.[61]

Jacob died in 521. This makes 476 the *terminus ante quem* for the events he is describing. Since Jacob was born c. 450, the events described here probably took place in the late 460s or early 470s, making the more likely date of composition c. 515.

I have not translated *eskōlē d-pārsāyē* here as "School of the Persians," because a relative clause follows *pārsāyē*, thus qualifying it (see underlined portion). Moreover, the particle *'īt* in the phrase *'īt (h)wā* ("there was") is unsuffixed and logically takes an indeterminate object. This suggests that *eskōlē* be translated as "*a* school" as opposed to "*the* school." In other words, Jacob is not referring to the School of the Persians here by name, but rather describing a particular school which was composed of Persians, a significant difference. Jacob's statement that the School harmed the East parallels the idea of the Nestorianization of the East that we find in Simeon's letter.

The purpose of Jacob's letter is apologetic: he needed to defend himself against charges of dyophysitism. Jacob was certainly influenced by Antiochene exegesis. For example, his poetical homilies (*mēmrē*) on creation provide ample evidence of Theodore of Mopsuestia's influence on him.[62] Although he does not explicitly state that he studied at this school, this passage from Letter XIV is usually taken as evidence for just that.[63] However, Jacob's epistolary statement does not decisively determine whether he was "in" the School or not. It stands to reason that if he is defending himself it would be foolish to mention the School in the first place. Rather, his reference to it seems to be an attempt to separate himself from the heretical works studied there. If the School was composed of Persians, as he states, would it not be assumed by the reader that

Jacob, who was not Persian, was therefore not part of the School? His purpose is to apologize for having read heretical books, and he seems to be blaming the presence of these books in the Edessa of his youth on this "school of Persians." However, following the *Chronicle of Siirt* (to be discussed below), perhaps Jacob was associated with the School in some informal way.[64] Perhaps his interest in Theodore of Mopsuestia brought him close to this circle, just as Ibas's association with the School by some of the sources was most likely due to his theological position and not to any active "membership." I have not found any other references to the School of the Persians in the biographical tradition of Jacob; however, West-Syrian sources would certainly prefer not to preserve such material.[65]

The next mention of the School of the Persians chronologically is in the mid-sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa*, which contains a brief reference to its closure: "In the year 800 (i.e., 489) the School of the Persians was uprooted from Edessa."[66] This line also appears as a lemma in the West-Syrian *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (completed in 775).[67] Despite its brevity, this reference is important because it is an independent attestation to the 489 date of closure, and it also suggests that it was a significant enough event to be fixed in a relatively sparse chronicle.

Not much later than the last dated entries in the *Chronicle of Edessa*, reference to the School of the Persians appears in the writing of John of Ephesus, another polemicist for the Miaphysite cause. John's eponym is a bit misleading, for, although he was ordained bishop of that city which was so symbolically important to Miaphysites, he never actually took his see. Like his predecessors, Jacob Baradaeus and Simeon of Bēt Aršam, John led a peripatetic life, spending time in the monastery and then traveling on mission for the Miaphysite cause. His *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, composed in 566–68, has a description of the School of the Persians in the chapter on the life of Simeon of Bēt Aršam.[68]

> This holy Simeon then even before the period of his episcopacy, besides the fervent zeal and enthusiasm for the true faith unto death which he possessed, was deeply versed in the Scriptures, and he was also ardent in practicing debate, beyond (in my opinion) any other man, even the ancient fathers; because besides the gift of God this other fact too summoned him to it, because he was also a Persian, and he lived in Persia, and it is in that country especially that the teaching of the school of (*yullphānā d-bēt*) Theodore and Nestorius is very widespread, so that believing bishops and their dioceses are few there, and further besides this teaching that of the school of (*yullphānā d-bēt*) Mani and Marcion and Bardaiṣan also had from this cause been much disseminated there, and Mani traveled much there in the same country, and there also they flayed him alive, and he died there; and Bardaiṣan and Marcion, because there was once a school (*eskōlē*) of Persians at Edessa, and the Persians are in general keen inquirers, they were trained in the tenets of Bardaiṣan and of Marcion and became immersed in them; and they carried this evil plant down and planted it in that country; even as Hiba (i.e., Ibas) the blasphemer who was once ruler there (of

the church of Edessa) made himself a promoter of that same school (*eskōlē*); because this man not only blasphemed like Nestorius, but even surpassed him in wickedness. When this bitter plant was spreading in the city of Edessa, the holy bishop Cyrus discovered it, and tore it out from its roots, and did not allow the school (*eskōlē*) of the Persians to be mentioned there again, as had been the case before; and this school was from that time established in the city of Nisibis, from which all that country drinks dregs of gall, so that even in this our country, the country of the Romans, some men taste of it.[69]

It is likely that Simeon's letter, discussed above, lies behind this passage and that, like the letter, it aims to explain the origins of "Nestorianism" in Persia.[70] We have a parallel for this in John's reliance on Simeon's *Letter on the Himyarite Martyrs*, which he found in Pseudo-Zachariah of Mitylene's *Church History* (Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre later relied on John).[71] As in Jacob's Letter XIV, the Syriac of the first reference to the School suggests that the translation be "a school of Persians," as opposed to the more formal and definite "the School of the Persians."

John has extended the heretical pedigree of the School of the Persians by suggesting that the works of Bardaiṣan and Marcion were studied in the School prior to those of Theodore and Nestorius. However, Mani, Bardaiṣan, and Marcion are standard heretical figures among Syriac writers. While in Ephrem's day these three represented powerful and threatening theological positions, by John's time, despite the ongoing existence of their followers, they had become standard heresiological bad guys.

John's account is more streamlined than Simeon's. It describes Ibas as a promoter (Syriac *mrabyānā*) of the School. John was writing later in the sixth century, when Ibas's *Letter to Mari* had become even more central in the dispute surrounding the posterity of Chalcedon. His antipathy towards Ibas's *Letter* and to the dyophysite School of Nisibis would have given him more reason to connect Ibas to the School of the Persians, the predecessor of his enemies' intellectual center.

The next Miaphysite source, the *Chronicle* of Michael, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch (1166–99), incorporates a document by the West-Syrian Mārūtā of Takrit concerning the controversial East-Syrian Bishop of Nisibis, Barṣaumā, "ostensibly written at the request of the Miaphysite patriarch John of Antioch (630–648)."[72] In setting the context for his discussion of Barṣaumā, Mārūtā mentions what seems to be the School of the Persians.

After Nestorius was anathematized and deposed to Patmos by the council of Ephesus, then Rabbula brought these despicable commentaries of Theodore and his master Diodore (to Edessa). After they were read, all of the church of God anathematized them, for the emperor Theodosius ordered that wherever they were found any of their writings should be burned and everyone who agreed with them should die. When Rabbula returned to Edessa he found in the School

of the Orientals books of Theodore and he burned them in the middle of the city, and those of the opinion of this heresy fled to Nisibis, which was on the border with the Persians at that time.[73]

Whether this passage is taken directly from Mārūtā (the historicity of which has been questioned[74]) or has been altered by Michael's hand, it seems to be telescoping events of the fifth century.[75] The reference to Rabbula burning the books of Theodore is attested earlier, for example, in the *Cause*.[76] However, the *Cause* does not place the translation of these texts in the School of the Persians. In fact, it specifically states that Theodore's works only came into the School of the Persians after they were translated into Syriac.[77] The flight referred to seems to be that of 489. Furthermore, the name "School of the Orientals" is not attested anywhere else and may be an attempt to attach this School more closely to the theologically aberrant East Syrians. This kind of conflation of events can also be found in the later East-Syrian *Chronicle of Arbela* (see below).

## Constantinopolitan Sources for the School of the Persians

The first of the Western Greek sources for the School of the Persians is two brief references in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodore Anagnostes ("the Lector"). Theodore's history was composed after 518, and may in fact have been composed a bit later since there was a tendency for church historians to avoid treating contemporary events (e.g., Eusebius on Arianism, the three Theodosian historians on Nestorius, Evagrius Scholasticus on certain events under Justinian).

In the city of Edessa there was a Christian school of Persian study, as they say (*didaskaleîon Christiānikòn . . . Persikês, hôs phāsín, diatribês*), from which I think the Persians take the side of Nestorius, since some were taking pleasure in the views of Nestorius and Theodore and presiding over the place and transmitting their own opinions to the Persians.[78]

He says that Zeno gave a command and overturned the so-called School (*diatribên*) of the Persians in Edessa since it was transmitting the teachings of Nestorius, Diodore, and Theodore.[79]

The first quotation maintains the tradition we have already seen in other texts that Persia was "Nestorianized" via the School of the Persians. Although Theodore uses the words "diatribê" and "didaskaleîon" and not "scholê," the form "of the Persians" in the second quotation is consistent with the other sources. In contrast to some of the above-cited sources, which do not necessarily use "School of the Persians" as a formal name for the School, Theodore attests this formal usage when he

says "so-called" (*kalouménēn*). Theodore takes the word "scholḗ," the only term that appears in all the Syriac sources, to be interchangeable with other names for places of learning, "didaskaleîon" and "diatribḗ." This may in fact confuse things, since it is not exactly clear what "school" meant in its Edessene usage. Furthermore, the use of "didaskaleîon" and "diatribḗ" may reflect the influence of Eusebius's description of the so-called School of Alexandria, since both terms are used in his description.[80] Apparently, Theodore does not think the School's ethnic appellation is due to its members being Persian, but rather connects the name to the "Nestorianization" of Persia as an apparent explanation.

The other Greek source from Constantinople is more complex in both its dating and its content. The *Life of Alexander the Sleepless* is a problematic work. It is extant in only one manuscript from the tenth or eleventh century.[81] Its editor has suggested that the portion of the text in which the protagonist meets up with and converts the famous Rabbula of Edessa is a later interpolation.[82] Even if this section is part of the original work, it seems doubtful that the material in the section about Rabbula is authentic.[83] In contrast, Blum and Vööbus take this text's statements about schools in Edessa at face value.[84]

> For when the bishop of Edessa took his final rest and the whole city and environs were seeking him (i.e., Rabbula) for pastor, by the vote of many he was chosen leader of the people (hēgoúmenos toû laoû = princeps populi?). Edessa was the metropolis of Mesopotamia.[85] Judged worthy of the episcopate, he became a port of divine knowledge, not only of Syria and Armenia and Persia, but also of the whole inhabited world. In this city the Lord established from the beginning schools (*paideutḗria*) of the Syriac language. For the leaders and powerful in livelihood send their children to be educated in it. Then the bishop Rabbula came into power and with the holy spirit working with him he was zealous to make as one all (the citizens) into the true and sturdy faith, always struggling to act as a teacher. And truly at this it is possible to say: it is sufficient for a student that he be as his teacher (Mt 10:25). I will describe (it) and this is a good thing which this blessed man did, for it will benefit those who pay attention. For he was not less a father of widows and orphans. Inviting the foreign children of the pagans (lit. Greeks) from their schools twice a month and bringing them together unto himself he would teach them the word of truth (or: a speech about the truth), and taking the seal of the holy spirit, thus being benefited the greatest, they went to their homelands. And as time progressed, entering a good habit, they transmit it to their children unto today.[86]

The number of discrepancies between this text's account of Rabbula and what we know of the bishop from more authentic sources on his career points to the lack of historicity of this account. The *Life of Rabbula* does not mention "schools" in its long discussion of his many reforms in the city. It has been suggested that the *Life of Alexander* is responding to the early sixth-century accusations against the *Akoímētoi* in Constantinople

of being Nestorians.[87] In the polemical context of mid-sixth-century Constantinople the author may have assumed that a reader would know that Rabbula was the enemy of Ibas and the adamant supporter of Cyril of Alexandria. If it is the author's purpose to defend Alexander from accusations of Nestorianism, what better way to do this than to make him the one who converted Rabbula to Christianity! This, of course, shows a lack of acquaintance with the *Life of Rabbula*, which gives the famous bishop a typically pagan father and a Christian mother and narrates a very different story of his conversion.[88] If the text was interpolated, it points to a mid-sixth-century date of composition, for this was when the *Akoímētoi* were under attack.[89] Part of this antipathy towards the *Akoímētoi* may also derive from the fact that the addressee of Ibas's *Letter to Mari* was probably a monk in the monastery of Eirenaion at the time of Marcellus, successor of John, who was the successor of Alexander himself.[90] The letters between Marcellus and Theodoret indicate his theological leanings, and Marcellus signed the condemnation of Eutyches in Flavian's attack on him in 448.[91] As Grillmeier notes, the Sleepless monks were accused of producing "historically pregnant" forgeries.[92]

It might seem far-fetched, but I would suggest that this whole passage may be an extrapolation from the Acts of the "Latrocinium" Council of 449 (to be addressed in the following chapter) or some intermediary source. In the Acts there is a reference to the Schools of the Persians, of the Syrians, and of the Armenians, and to how they participate in the anathematizing of Ibas. The author seems to have heard of these three schools and made up this story according to how he imagined them. This would explain why the Schools are presented here as if they were established for children, while all other evidence points to the "Schools" being far more advanced and learned than the elementary level. This would not be the only doctored document to come from the *Akoímētoi*.[93] The most recent work on the *Life of Alexander the Sleepless* confirms some of my speculations. Caner suggests that a late-fifth or early-sixth-century date for the text is probable and agrees that the Rabbula material is an interpolation by a later hand.[94]

## East-Syrian Sources for the School of the Persians

In comparison with the West-Syrian sources, which clearly demonstrate antipathy toward the School of the Persians, and the Constantinopolitan sources, which show little knowledge of it at all, the East-Syrian sources may contain the most information about the School, but information no less distorted by time and historiographical politics. The two most important East-Syrian sources for the School of the Persians are the *Cause* and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā(s). Elsewhere I have addressed

the possibility that the authors of these two texts are the same person, as well as the dependence of the *Cause* either on the *Ecclesiastical History* or on some shared source.[95] Whatever our position may be concerning the relationship between these two texts and their author(s), it is significant that they represent the perspective of members of the School of Nisibis, the purported successor institution to the School of the Persians, and thus should be examined together.

The given title of the *Ecclesiastical History* in the one remaining manuscript of the work is "The History of the holy fathers who were persecuted because of the truth."[96] This text, composed not long after 569, consists mainly of a large collection of biographies of famous churchmen. The final one is of Abraham of Bēt Rabban, thus dating the text to the mid- to later sixth century.[97] The material on the School of the Persians is found in the second to last chapter, which treats the life of Narsai, the famous Syriac poet associated with the School of the Persians and later the first head of the School of Nisibis.[98] Since the text is interested in the persecution of individual righteous Christians, it describes what appear to be the events surrounding the closure of the School of the Persians as the personal story of Narsai. Ibas is not mentioned in this source. In fact, the last event mentioned by the text before the chapter treating the life of Narsai is the condemnation of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus in 431. Thus, the text ignores most of the Western ecclesiastical events of the mid- to later fifth century.

We should recall that in contrast to the West Syrians, East Syrians show little interest in the ecclesiastical events of the Roman Empire; they do not seem to have had any particular desire to defend Ibas, if they even knew much about him at all. The little East-Syrian evidence for Ibas is thin. ʿAbdīšōʿ attributes a number of works to him, but we know little else.[99] For example, British Library Add. 12138, copied at the monastery of Mār Gabriel near Harran by Bābai the deacon in 899, includes on its last page some "traditions of the masters of the Schools." It mentions that Ibas translated Theodore of Mopsuestia's works, but this could have been learned from the various references in Western church canons from the fifth century. [100] Furthermore, Ibas anathematized Nestorius at Chalcedon and thus would not have been a hero in the East—perhaps the story of the charges of corruption against him continued in the East as well. The sixth-century debate surrounding his *Letter to Mari* (e.g., the Three Chapters controversy 533–43) seems to have been a Western concern, caused by the tensions deriving ultimately from Chalcedon itself.

The *Ecclesiastical History*, from the latter part of the sixth century, refers to the School as the "School of Edessa" and as the "assembly" (*knūšyā*).[101] Two factors may explain why this title is used and not also "School of the Persians." First, as we saw with Jacob of Sarug's Letter

XIV, the more indefinite "School of Persians" may be the better rendering of the ethnically tagged title as it appears in some of the sources, as opposed to "*The* School of *the* Persians." For Christians in Nisibis, who might have seen themselves as Persian either because of their ethnicity or at least because of the empire in which they had lived, adding "of Persians" would have been redundant. Persians visiting other Persians in Edessa would certainly need not specify among themselves which "School" they were visiting aside from the fact that it was in Edessa. Second, the ethnic title may have stuck in the West because it would be useful for propaganda purposes: it would suggest that its members (i.e., the East Syrians) were traitors to the Roman Empire.

The second major East-Syrian source for the School of the Persians is the *Cause*, which we can date to c. 600.[102] Like Simeon's letter, the *Cause* uses diadochic language stemming from Greek literary practice to emphasize the continuity of traditions. This use of diadochic language, which resembles a similar practice in Rabbinic texts such as *Avot*, will be addressed also in Chapter Five. In contrast to the *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Cause* depicts the closure of the School as a communal phenomenon and not as a misfortune that befell Narsai alone. Again, Ibas is not mentioned. The *Cause* refers to the School as "the assembly" "in Edessa."[103] St. Ephrem "made a great assembly of a school there."[104] The terms "assembly" and "school" are used throughout the *Cause* for the many schools described therein.

Both of these sources will be important for the reconstructive work to be done in the following chapter. However, it is important to emphasize that the dependence of the *Cause* on the *Ecclesiastical History* or on some shared source means that instances where the two texts agree should not immediately be accepted as instances of multiple attestation of evidence in the sources. Furthermore, besides mutually ignoring the figure of Ibas, the two texts disagree about key facts concerning the School of the Persians, such as who the leader was prior to Narsai (one text says "a certain Rabbula", the other "Qyorē"—notably both of these names belong to renowned enemies of the School), and this may suggest that by the mid- to later sixth century the actual story of the school that preceded the School of Nisibis had become obscure.[105]

Another striking difference between the two texts is that the later one, the *Cause*, presents a more streamlined and consistent version of the story of the transferral from Edessa to Nisibis. In contrast, the version in the *Ecclesiastical History* contains more ambiguities and loose ends. In fact, an analogy can be drawn between the earlier West-Syrian letter of Simeon and the later West-Syrian version of John of Ephesus, and between the earlier East-Syrian *Ecclesiastical History* and the later East-Syrian *Cause*: in both the West-Syrian and the East-Syrian cases the version of the story

becomes clearer and more streamlined in the later source. This streamlining of history can also be seen in the fact that the later East-Syrian source, the *Cause*, incorporates the false tradition that Ephrem founded the School of the Persians.[106] Judging from the apparent increase in the clarity of these sources over time, both West-Syrian and East-Syrian, I would suggest that our sources are not becoming more trustworthy, but rather are engaging in a process of narrativization, whereby disparate facts are fitted into a clear, yet not necessarily factually based, storyline.

This process can be seen in a much later source, the *Chronicle of Siirt*. Although it apparently relies on the *Cause* or on some related source, it may nevertheless provide some useful information, if not on the School of the Persians itself, then at least on the resettling and foundation in Nisibis.[107] In its chapter on the life of Narsai, when Narsai flees to Nisibis, he finds "a small school" which belonged to "Simeon of Bēt Garmaï" (al-Jarmaqâni).[108] If there is truth to this (the founding of the School of Nisibis will be discussed in Chapter Four), it further destabilizes the supposed direct and immediate continuity between the Schools of Edessa and Nisibis. As mentioned above, the *Chronicle* states that Jacob of Sarug studied at the School of Edessa with Barṣaumā and was of "orthodox" belief. However, when he saw that the emperor was supporting the party of Severus (i.e., the Miaphysites), he switched sides.[109] Perhaps by the time of the *Chronicle*'s or its source's composition the West-Syrian accusations against Jacob connecting him to the School of the Persians had reached the East Syrians, and the author decided to use this information to demonstrate the eminent West-Syrian poet to be a scoundrel.

Another East-Syrian source, the *Chronicle of Arbela*, is also a problematic work (the text may be a late nineteenth-century forgery). The last historical reference it makes is from the mid-sixth century.[110]

> In this time a perfect man, Mār Hibay (i.e., Ibas) the Bishop, was known in Edessa, from whose labors Orthodoxy benefited very much; what pains and difficulties he endured from the students of the sinners a pen is not able to depict. In the School of Edessa he unceasingly would teach correct things. He utterly defeated the perversities until the hour of his death. After his death the students of deceit gathered and became strong and were able to drive out of the city all of the Persian students. These came to their lands and planted in them many schools so that they would flee before Satan. Barṣaumā of Nisibis settled Narsai by his side as a celebrated teacher and he set up a great school of much intercourse between the brothers and it did not cease to grow with sons and celebrated teachers for the Catholicos. There he interpreted all the divine scriptures and he did not slip away not even in one thing from the teaching of the interpreter. Many from our land went to him as I have learned from some trustworthy people.[111]

As with some of the West-Syrian sources discussed above, it seems that the *Chronicle of Arbela* telescopes the events of fifth-century Edessa and

makes Ibas the head of the School until his death, after which the School moves to Nisibis. It is interesting that only one of our latest sources, one that is extremely untrustworthy, is the text that directly connects Ibas to the School. This connection seems to be a further instance of the narrativizing process mentioned above.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to point out significant problems in the various sources employed in the reconstruction of the School of the Persians. The sources are less reliable than previously thought, because of both their mutual dependence on one another and their complicity in projecting sixth century institutions and concerns back onto those of the fifth century. The silence of a number of sources may also be telling in this matter; for example, several texts that preserve earlier information on Edessa are silent about the School. Even more striking, considering some of the speculation of the secondary literature, no schools at all are mentioned in the *Life of Rabbula*, which seems to have been composed not long after his death in 435/6.

A significant parallelism exists between the sources for the School of the Persians from the sixth century onwards and the scholarly reconstructions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In an attempt to understand the School of the Persians, particularly its closure in 489, the ancient authors employed a school paradigm either to condemn it as a bastion of heresy or to laud it as a besieged stronghold of orthodoxy. This school paradigm allowed for members of both sides of the theological divide to imagine it as the predecessor of the School of Nisibis. These imaginative historical reconstructions, which developed within a strongly polemical context, represent only a version of reality, one that was palatable and useful to those engaged in such polemic. Modern scholars have failed to take into account the discursive context in which the sources were produced and thus have been misled by them.

*Chapter 3*

# The School of the Persians (Part 2): From Ethnic Circle to Theological School

The purpose of the previous chapter was to destabilize the traditional view of the School of the Persians, particularly by demonstrating the inconsistencies and motivations of its various sources. The goal of this one is to put forward a different framework for understanding the little evidence we have for the School. A more plausible historical reconstruction of the School of the Persians imagines this institution as a loosely knit study circle, more like an ancient voluntary association than a formal school, and as having only begun to develop a more coherent internal structure at the time of its expulsion from Edessa. Of the numerous sources attesting to the School of the Persians, only one was composed before the closure of the School in 489: the Acts of the "Latrocinium" or "Robber" Council of Ephesus of 449. Despite the relative paucity of information it provides, it is perhaps the most important and telling of the sources because it was not motivated by the conflict around and following the closure of the School. Therefore, a more critical approach to the School must begin with this text.

## The Acts of the "Latrocinium" Council

The earliest reference to the School of the Persians is found in the Acts of the second Council of Ephesus (the so-called "Latrocinium" council).[1] On August 22 in 449, the second Council of Ephesus reconvened to condemn and depose, one by one, bishops whose beliefs were obstacles to the theological harmony sought by the emperor, Theodosius II. Some years before this, at the Council of Ephesus of 431, Cyril of Alexandria had forced through the recognition of Mary as *Theotokos* ("Bearer of God") as well as the condemnation of Nestorius, despite the protest of the imperial authorities. This time at Ephesus, Dioscorus, who had succeeded Cyril as bishop of Alexandria in 444, was attempting to live up to his mentor's example in furthering the case against the dyophysites. The council first met on August 8, but things had got out of hand when Flavian, Bishop of Constantinople, and Eusebius of Dorylaeum were condemned.

These two had been responsible for the condemnation of Eutyches at Constantinople a year earlier in November 448, and since this council had just exculpated Eutyches of any theological error, it seemed right to condemn his accusers (even though one of them was the first to accuse Nestorius of theological error!). Violence broke out and imperial soldiers rushed in to restore order. Flavian died several days later from the wounds he received in the mêlée and Eusebius fled to Rome.

By August 22, the majority of the over one hundred bishops in attendance at this highly staged event in the Church of Mary were supporters of Dioscorus. Dioscorus's adversaries had been chased away or, in the case of the theologically sophisticated Theodoret of Cyrrhus, told specifically by the emperor himself not to come. The proceedings against Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, began with the recitation of an imperial letter from the fifth day before the Calends of July asking the synod to relieve Edessa from the burden of such an unworthy bishop and replace him. At this point "John, the Presbyter and first notary" announced: "Monks who are from the city of Edessa are standing outside and say that they have imperial documents. What then does Your Holiness order (us to do) about them?"[2] This was certainly a formality, since in the Acts, just before the reading of the above mentioned imperial letter, Bishop Thalassius of Caesarea suggests that they keep things moving so as not to cause a delay for "the monks who are here."[3] The monks were invited in and a letter was read, dated to June of the same year, from the emperor to a certain Jacob, inviting him to Ephesus. John the Notary then announced that there were similar letters, which had been sent to eleven other archimandrites.[4]

The Acts then describe the city's various complaints against Ibas.[5] We have no way of knowing if these were true. Drijvers suggests that although some of the charges against Ibas may be fabricated or exaggerated there nevertheless was a sharp contrast between Ibas and his enemy and predecessor as bishop, Rabbula (d. 435/6). Ibas was a "worldly scholar" and Rabbula an "ascetic bishop."[6] However, Drijvers's characterization of the two exaggerates their differences. Ibas may have been behind the translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's works, but Rabbula may have preceded him in such endeavors with his translation of Cyril of Alexandria's works.[7] Ibas seems to have been from an important family, judging from the fact that he and his brother were bishops, but we know from his *Life* that Rabbula came from a rich family and received a Greek education.[8] Drijvers correctly notes: "it is highly interesting that the *vita Rabbulae* emphasizes exactly those qualities of the bishop that are totally missing with Hiba [Ibas] according to the charges brought against him for the *comes* Chaireas."[9] However, those making accusations against Ibas at Ephesus and those who had previously organized the acclamations to Chaireas on his approach to the city were probably from the same Miaphysite

circles in which the *Life* was produced. Of course Ibas's flaws and Rabbula's virtues matched. The contrast that Drijvers draws between the two figures is too stark, and we do not know nearly enough about Ibas to make such statements about him. There is no evidence for resistance to his return to the episcopal see after the Council of Chalcedon two years later in 451, and the fact that he successfully defended himself at two councils prior to Ephesus may suggest that the charges against him were fabricated.

According to the Acts, one of various acclamations made against Ibas was signed by citizens from all sectors of the city of Edessa.

> They set their hand to it (i.e. subscribed): all the clergy and heads of monasteries, monks and members of orders (*bnay qyāmā*), worthies (Gr. *axiōmatikoí*) and citizens (Gr. *politeuómenoi*) and Romans and the Schools of the Armenians, of the Persians, and of the Syrians, and the artisans and the whole city.[10]

This is the earliest reference we have to the School of the Persians.[11] As stated above, it is significant because it is the only reference to the School before its closure in 489, after which it became a *cause célèbre* for Nestorians and a *bête noire* for others.

It is unlikely that "the whole city" asked for the removal of Ibas. In fact, from the proceedings of the Acts, we can only be sure that Ibas had a large number of enemies in monastic circles.[12] This would not be surprising, considering the monastic interests of his infamous predecessor, Rabbula, bishop until his death in 435. The monks opposed to Ibas were probably followers of Rabbula and, and as suggested above, may have been connected to the same circles that produced his *Life* not long after his death. Some members of these same circles may have tended to the cultic site that developed around his grave.[13]

The titles of the three schools mentioned in this passage suggest that we take more seriously the ethnic aspect of the "School of the Persians." Apparently, the three "schools" were important enough within the city that their names were included in this attempt to sack the bishop. This passage also would lead us to believe that Ibas was not associated with the School of the Persians and that the School was not generally known for its dyophysite leanings. While most of the secondary literature says that Ibas was a major figure at the School, this text—the only source contemporary with him—suggests that he had no direct connection to it: otherwise the monks' claims would be absurd. Perhaps in the mid-fifth century the schools did not have easily identifiable theological positions but rather were essentially ethnic groupings.

## "Schools" in Fifth-Century Edessa

We can only speculate as to what the three "schools" mentioned in the "Latrocinium" Acts were in 449. Previous scholars have suggested that

the origins of this "School of the Persians" may stem from the exodus of Christians from certain regions ceded to the Sasanians by Jovian in 363. After the death of Julian the Apostate, the new emperor Jovian made a speedy peace with the Persians and handed over to them five transtigritine provinces, two of which had Armenian populations.[14] The Christian population of Nisibis migrated to Amida (Diyarbakir) when the Persians took control of Nisibis.[15] That Ephrem, the most famous refugee from Nisibis, ended up in Edessa tells us that some of these Eastern Christians settled there. Thus the three schools mentioned in the Acts may reflect the mixed ethnic and religious makeup of the Christian community of Edessa, especially after the immigration of Armenian and Persian Christians.

A Christianity in conformity with proto-Orthodox and later Orthodox standards came late to Edessa. The sources reveal a heterogeneity within Edessene Christianity lasting into the fifth century.[16] We may note Bishop Rabbula's many actions against heretics and his various reforms. Furthermore, we have evidence that when Christian populations migrated or were moved they would continue to maintain the practices of their homeland. For example, Greek-speaking Christians taken into captivity in Mesopotamia in the third century seem to have held onto a distinct ethnic Greek identity while living side by side with Syriac-speaking Christians.[17] Similarly, in the non-Christian sphere, recent work on religion at Dura-Europas has demonstrated that Palmyrenes at Dura kept their own religious practices.[18] We might also temporarily suspend our belief in Christian statements of universalism and see how—at least in practice—different Christian communities were organized along ethnic lines. A similar pre-Christian local cultural diversity can be seen in "pagan" cults of second- and third-century Edessa as well.[19] Perhaps the three schools represented variations within what was reckoned as the pale of legitimacy by the city's contemporary Orthodoxy and were in communion with each other, in contrast to the many others we know of in Edessa who were considered heretics by the Orthodox, such as Manichees, Arians, and Jewish-Christians. At times in the early Church, certain forms of diversity were permitted, as we see with the existence of Quartodecimans in different parts of the Church.[20]

Ignoring for a moment the more obvious and immediate academic meaning of the term "school," perhaps the language of "schools" provided a means for the Orthodox Edessene community to deal with the diversity of their Christianity. It is possible that the word "school" has a metaphorical meaning—even a metaphorical origin—and only in time did these "schools" become organizations for the transmission of knowledge. We should recall how early Christians borrowed terms from the institutional discourses of the Greco-Roman world to talk about themselves and their movement. This was particularly the case, as I described

in Chapter One, with pedagogical imagery among Syriac-speaking Christians. Thus, just as *haíresis* was a way of explaining and condemning Christian diversity, perhaps the notion of there being several "schools" of Christianity in Edessa was a way to come to terms with that city's ethnic and religious diversity. It also should be noted that this same pedagogical discourse may have affected the sources for the School of the Persians, thus making it more likely that the material would be set in pedagogical terms, as we saw in the previous chapter for Simeon of Bēt Aršam's letter.

This ethno-religious diversity would have been continually maintained by the influx of mixed populations into the city. Despite the long series of wars between Rome and Persia, the borders between the two empires remained easily permeable.[21] Trade continued, and from the little prosopographical evidence we have for the School of the Persians, we know that most of those associated with it came from the Persian realm. This means that the School continued to have links with the Church of the East, a fact which would no doubt be useful propaganda for Cyrus, the bishop of the city, in convincing the Emperor Zeno to shut it down. Whether the origins of these different "schools" lie in the exodus from Persia of 363 or not, these groups may have come from and/or been perpetuated by the movement of Christians along the trade routes that connected Edessa to Syria, Armenia, and the Sasanian realm.

In addition to its rise as a trade center, but related to it, was the development of Edessa as a center of pilgrimage. Egeria, the fourth-century pilgrim who has left us an account of her travels in the East, visited the city, and its relics, such as the letter and portrait of Jesus and the body of St. Thomas, would draw pilgrims for centuries to come.[22] The fame of the city's spring festival in honor of St. Thomas was such that it reached Gregory of Tours, who has left us an account of it.[23] Significantly, the possible location of the School of the Persians is directly across from where the Church of St. Thomas stood. The various guesthouses mentioned in the sources would have made travel for both commercial and religious reasons easier.[24] For example, in Amida, modern Diyarbakir, a Greek inscription from 437/8 on the gate on the north side of the city—also known in the past as the Bab al-Arman ("The Gate of the Armenians")—commemorates the construction of a hospice for travelers by the deacon Appius.[25] There is also reference to a monastery of the Edessenes and a "school called that of the Urtāyē," apparently composed of, or at least founded by, immigrants from Anzitene, east of Amida.[26] There were other ethnically associated institutions in the vicinity of Edessa itself, as suggested by the names of certain monasteries: for example, we read of the "Monastery of the Persians" and the "Monastery of the Orientals."[27]

Christians within the region would have also traveled in order to

acquire knowledge. The *Chronicle of Siirt* records that after peace was pledged between Yazdgard and Theodosius certain Persians migrated to Edessa to seek learning.[28] Of the many lives of ascetic holy men described by Theodoret of Cyrrhus, the *Historia Religiosa* includes a certain Aphrahat, a Persian from a good family who in the mid- to later fourth century came to Edessa to live outside the city as an ascetic before going on to Antioch. What would have inspired an ascetic to travel so far when he could have practiced his devotion on the Sasanian side of the border?[29]

One answer is that there was a culture of wandering that developed among the ascetics of Syria. The Messalians and the so-called sleepless monks (*Akoímētoi*) are two well-known groups with an ideology of transience in this region of commercial movement.[30] Hagiographical sources reveal a similar interest. According to his *Life*, the saint known as the "Man of God" of Edessa hid his true noble identity and came from Rome to live among the poor in Edessa.[31] The Apocryphal Acts, such as the *Acts of Thomas* and the late *Acts of Addai*, describe apostles wandering from land to land.[32]

We lack sufficient evidence to grasp fully the nature of the Persian population's religious and intellectual activities in Edessa, especially in the early fifth century. However, perhaps we can draw a line connecting the late fourth century Nisibene immigrants, exemplified by Ephrem of Nisibis, to the figures from the mid- to later fifth century, such as Ma'nā, Narsai, and Barṣaumā.[33] Philoxenus of Mabbug himself, the great enemy of the "Nestorians," seems to have come from Persia as well, and an early association with the School of the Persians, prior to his transformation into a Miaphysite enforcer, would explain his acquaintance with the work of Theodore of Mopsuestia.[34]

We might try to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of fifth-century Edessa by introducing evidence from the Armenian sources, which may shed some light on this dark period in the history of the Edessene "schools."[35] In c. 400 Maštots (361/2–440), along with the Catholicos Sahak (350–439), invented the Armenian alphabet in Samosata.[36] He then sent disciples out to Constantinople and Edessa, one city having more prestige, the other having more local cultural significance, since Edessa and Syriac Christianity in general would play a major role in the early development—liturgical, intellectual, and otherwise—of the Armenian church. Edessa was the major intellectual center in the vicinity of Armenia and continued to be so for some time. According to Armenian tradition, at some point in the mid-fifth century, Moses Khorenats'i traveled to the city and employed its archives (perhaps most famous for Eusebius of Caesarea's possible use of them).[37] However, such an early date for this author has been contested.[38] Similarly, Eznik of Kolb was sent to Edessa by Sahak and Maštots when Armenian literacy was still in its infancy, and

his life and literary work attest to the further burgeoning of literate culture in fifth-century Edessa.[39]

The School of the Armenians was perhaps the intellectual circle or center that Armenian ecclesiastics, ascetics, and merchants engaged with on their sojourns in the city.[40] It probably consisted of visitors and the local Armenian population that had developed in the city (a population which was perhaps continous with the Armenian community that lived in Edessa until the ethnic cleansing of the region in the early twentieth century). The one other reference to this school I have come across is in a manuscript from 599, in a colophon of a copy of the Peshitta version of Joshua, which is based on a text, according to this colophon, collated with a manuscript produced in the School of the Armenians.[41] There may also be a reference to members of this school when Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, writing c. 510, mentions that some "brothers from our schools" were killed in an earthquake while visiting Armenia.[42]

The Armenian material may also elucidate the intellectual immigrant culture of Edessa. Just as the roads from Edessa went north into Armenia, so also they went east into Persia. The origins of both the School of the Armenians and the School of the Persians may lie in the Christian exodus from the East in 363. Both communities and their respective associations would have retained their ethnic identity amid the continual influx of peoples into the city due to its being a center of trade, learning, and asceticism. The "School of the Syrians" cited in the Acts of 449 is the most obscure of the three schools. Since "Syria" and "Syrian" are multivalent terms which have been and still are used to refer to a variety of peoples and places, it is not clear whether the "School of the Syrians" was composed of immigrants who would have come from the south and southwest of the city or of those indigenous Christians from the city itself who were simply being differentiated from the other peoples such as Armenians and Persians who were flowing in.

The development of these different "schools" would have most likely been for purely practical reasons. Immigrant and ethnic groups in a multiethnic environment tend to maintain their communal networks so long as it is practically useful. If Edessa was an ethnically diverse city, as we know it was, then it stands to reason that the intellectual circles of the city may have reflected this diversity. Classical education was an assimilating system: all who took part in it learned Greek. However, Edessa, as the numerous pre-Christian Syriac inscriptions attest, was already on the margins of this system, and Christianity provided further potential—partially due, oddly enough, to a Greek understanding of language that insisted on the priority of the signified over the signifier—for a non-Greek-speaking intellectual culture to thrive and schism to occur.

## School as Voluntary Association

As I suggested above, "school" at first meant only one of several legitimate groups of Christians within the ethnically diverse community of Edessa. Only gradually did it take on its more specific academic meaning and eventually become a separate institution, particularly after the School of the Persians moved from Edessa to Nisibis. The origins of the School of the Persians and the other ethnic "schools" of Edessa may be better understood if placed within the broad spectrum of voluntary associations that we find attested throughout the ancient world. Moshe Weinfeld has made a similar argument for the community at Qumran.[43] These associations, which have a multitude of appellations (the Greek *thíasos*, *éranos*, and *koinón*; and the Latin *collegium*, *secta*, and *factio*; the Syriac *gawwā* appears to be an equivalent term), varied in objective and in level of commitment, but it is useful to examine them as a whole because they tell us about the social organizations usually ignored by traditional analysis, which focuses on formal political and ecclesiastical organizations only. Furthermore, it would be difficult to develop a strict typology of the different kinds of organizations, since their "boundaries and terminology were fluid."[44] Attested in various sources from the fourteenth century B.C.E. to the third century C.E., the *marzeaḥ* may be seen as a Near Eastern version of the various Greco-Roman organizations.[45]

Literacy seems to have played a role in many of these groups.[46] An oft-cited fragment of Posidonius, the first-century B.C.E. philosopher and historian, may point to the literary relevance of such groups in the Near East. In criticizing the luxury of the Syrians, he writes:

> Hence they held many gatherings at which they feasted continually, using the gymnasia as if they were baths, anointing themselves with expensive oils and perfumes, and living in the *grammateia*—for so they called the commons where diners met—as though they were their private houses, . . .[47]

This Near Eastern voluntary association, which engaged in a practice equivalent to the Greek symposium, seems to have played an important role in the region in the socialization and informal education of youths, as the symposium did for their counterparts in the West.

Another institution that has been better understood using the category of voluntary association is the synagogue, which, inasmuch as it was an ethnic communal space where elementary learning for children as well as higher study for adults could take place, is certainly comparable to the School of the Persians. Philo of Alexandria was willing to make such a comparison between the synagogue and the voluntary association.[48] Does the kind of complex relationship between ethnicity and religion

attested, for example, in the Aphrodisias synagogue inscription serve as a comparandum for the makeup of the School of the Persians?[49] This third-century inscription, along with the abundance of evidence we have for "God-Fearers" in antiquity, shows how gentiles could be incorporated into Jewish institutions, perhaps in the same way we might imagine non-Persians, such as Jacob of Sarug, hanging around the School of the Persians.

It is worth noting that some decades before the closure of the School of the Persians, the Jews of Edessa suffered the same fate that befell the School. In both cases, a form of *damnatio memoriae* was practiced, when the building that was closed down was replaced with one representative of the exactly opposite ideology. The *Chronicle of Edessa* records:

> In the year 723 (411/2 C.E.) Rabbula was bishop in Edessa. He built the House of Mār Stephen which had earlier been the House of the Sabbath of the Jews. He built it by order of the emperor.[50]

The letter of Simeon of Bēt Aršam records that a church of Mary the *Theotokos* (*yāldat alāhā*) was built in the place of the School of the Persians.[51] These two events are similar. Appropriately, both of these actions were taken by the bishop with the permission of the emperor, at least according to the sources. Just as Stephen the protomartyr was "persecuted" by the Jews (cf. Acts 6:8–8:1), so also, according to the West Syrians, Mary the Mother of God was persecuted by the Nestorians, who on the basis of their Christology remained intransigent in their refusal to call her by the esteemed title "Theotokos." The similarity of these two events helps further to demonstrate the continuing connections between, or rather the inseparability of, ethnicity and religion in Edessa and the history of the School of the Persians.

## The School of the Persians: Its Appearance and Closure

Perhaps the School of the Persians became an irritant to the Miaphysites of the city only after it had become a more internally coherent and distinct institution. Several developments would have led to this. The first of these is the emergence of an internal hierarchy within the School.[52] The two main East-Syrian sources, the *Cause* and the *Ecclesiastical History*, describe the organization of the School as being divided into a tripartite hierarchy of teachers not long before its closure.[53]

Although this event is described by the two separate sources, we lack more than one attestation for it, since the two passages which describe it are one of the several instances where the *Cause* and the *Ecclesiastical History* overlap, either because they share a source or because the *Cause* depends on the *Ecclesiastical History*.[54] The later *Cause* renders the expressions

for the different subjects of learning found in the *Ecclesiastical History* into abstract technical terms (e.g., *hegyānā, qeryānā,* and *puššāqā* become *mhagyānūtā, maqryānūtā,* and *mphašqānūtā*). The later source may be reifying the duties of the fifth-century school and understanding them according to late-sixth-century Nisibene practices. Furthermore, since the offices attributed to the School of the Persians by these two sources were clearly offices that existed in Nisibis, it is possible that the description of their creation in Edessa at the School of the Persians may be a projection back onto the School, a kind of foundation myth for the Nisibene hierarchy, and that such an organization never developed at Edessa.

However, despite the motivation of these sources, perhaps there is some truth to their claims about the formation of a hierarchy in Edessa. We know there were some schools for elementary literacy in the Syriac milieu.[55] The School of the Persians, whatever it was, maintained more than just training in literacy; exegesis was studied and practiced there. As we will also discuss in following chapter, the School of Nisibis, the successor institution to the School of the Persians, had a three-tiered system of instruction. It may be significant that this system was similar to that of the Greco-Roman educational system. There was the *mhagyānā,* who seems to have taught the alphabet and, as the name suggests, how to vocalize a text. He would be equivalent to the *magister ludi.* There was then the *maqryānā,* or reader, who would fill the position of the ancient grammarian, and then on top was the *mphašqānā,* or exegete, similar to the rhetor or philosopher. Although they disagree about the identity of the person, both the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā and the *Cause* mention that the head of the School created distinct offices and formalized its hierarchy. However, the ancient ideal of education found in the sources should not be confused with the real. There were not usually schools in our sense of the word with different classes, as if all three teachers—the elementary teacher, the grammarian, and the rhetorician—were part of one institution.[56] Nevertheless, depending on how Hellenized we take Nisibis and the Persian realm to have been, the three-tiered system would perhaps have to derive from the more classically influenced milieu of Edessa rather than that of Nisibis.

Other evidence for school offices in Edessa comes from sources which seem to have been composed in the city itself in the late fifth century. Sometime prior to his flight from Edessa to Nisibis, Narsai wrote self-defensive statements in his homilies, at the same time attacking his enemies.

> It was not in fear of their words that I turned aside from my discourse;
> Upon them I have turned lest they hinder the journey of truth.
> I have been extremely zealous against the impudence of their minds,
> Because, although ignorant, they are usurping the ranks of the office of "rabban."[57]

The foolish zeal of those who mingle (the natures) has compelled me to say it!
It was not of my own desire that I have attempted to ascend to the height above;
those (minglers) I want to bring down to earth because they have shown so much insolence.
It is not pride that has taken hold of me to strive after things secret;
It is the arrogance of their blasphemous words that I have sought to repress!
It was not the rank of the office of "rabban" that I have sought to usurp for myself!
The childish of heart have uttered such a preposterous assertion, and it has displeased me![58]

These passages seem to derive from Narsai's Edessene period, when he was in conflict with the pro-Cyril party. The context of Narsai's polemic can be rendered in different ways. One possibility is that his enemies were not in the School of the Persians, but perhaps in the School of the Armenians. If this was the case, then the office referred to in the first quotation is in a different school from his own and the referent in the second quotation is to members of yet another school who are casting aspersions on Narsai's rank in the School of the Persians. Taking the enemies of whom he is speaking as part of the School of the Persians changes the whole dynamic of the conflict. In that case the conflict would center around the leadership of the School of the Persians, which would mean that the School had a Cyriline party that eventually lost. If this was in fact the situation, the event these two passages refer to could be Narsai's creation of the three offices of the School, elevating the position of the head of the School by creating sub-offices under it. This would fit with the envy of him that the *Ecclesiastical History* describes.[59]

This process of institutionalization would have no doubt been spurred on by similar developments within the monasteries. Even the title "rabban" used by Narsai above is a term often used of monastic masters. Thus it is noteworthy that the *Ecclesiastical History*'s "Life of Narsai" describes the hero as moving back and forth for several years between the monastery and the School of the Persians.[60]

Along with the formal development of offices in the School, another development notably contributing to the internal coherence of the School was the gradual evolution of a particular tradition of exegesis.[61] At least according to the much later *Cause*, this exegetical tradition can be divided into two parts: what is referred to as "the tradition of the school" and the commentary tradition of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The *Cause* states:

For also that which we call the tradition of the school, we do not mean the interpretation of the Interpreter (i.e., Theodore), but rather these other things that were transmitted from mouth to ear of old. Then afterwards the blessed Mār Narsai mixed them into his homilies and the rest of his writings.[62]

The *Cause* states that this tradition goes back to Ephrem, and before him to the mythical Mār Addai, "who was at first the founder of that assembly of Edessa."[63] Narsai's work is understood to be comparable to Theodore's prior massive exegetical project, which is described in detail by the *Cause*.[64] If the *Cause* can be trusted, then it reveals to us here the community's memories, some over one hundred years old, of the history of their exegetical tradition.

As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, there is no evidence for the philosophical endeavors attributed to the School of the Persians by contemporary scholars. Furthermore, it is not clear how much translation of patristic material was done in the School itself. Even the *Cause*, not a particularly trustworthy source because of its date of composition, states specifically that translations of Theodore of Mopsuestia were transmitted to the School after being translated into Syriac and that before this exegesis was based on the works of Ephrem.[65] Jacob of Sarug says explicitly that the heretical works of Diodore were studied in the School, but his statement about their translation does not mention the School. If the School was ethnically based, as I have argued, then it is less plausible that translation work would have been done there, since the members would have been less likely to have the knowledge of Greek required for such work. One figure which may prove an exception is the late fifth-century Maʿnâ of Shiraz, who was known for translating Greek into Syriac in Edessa and later Syriac into Persian for the Catholicos.[66] Both Ibas and Rabbula had Greek educations and were involved in such projects.[67] However, in this chapter and the last I have suggested that the connection between Ibas and the School of the Persians was looser than scholars usually state. Ibas's translation project is the most commonly cited evidence for patristic translation at the School of the Persians, despite the paucity of evidence. Furthermore, comparative evidence from other instances of institutionalization of learning suggests that schools often do not create their own secondary literature, but rather are formed after the creation and compilation of it, that is, the literature helps to create the school.[68]

Contemporary theological developments would have also led to the differentiation and separation of the School of the Persians from the rest of Edessene Christian society. The School is usually described as a hotbed of Nestorianism, and it is no doubt true that the School had a predilection for Antiochene theology. However, Persian Christians may have taken a liking to Theodore of Mopsuestia, for example, not only because of his particular exegetical ingenuity but also because of the shared background of Antiochene and early Syriac theology. I would suggest that the School of the Persians did not *become* a bastion of

Nestorianism, but instead, because of its being constantly fueled by an influx of theologically traditional Christians from Persia, became an island of a conservative Syriac theology.[69] This theological tendency would have been reinforced from within by the study of these newly translated texts and defined from without by the antipathy of Miaphysites and the Orthodox. Thus, what may have occurred is that the School was originally only ethnically marked but because of this ethnic marking became theologically marked as well. In this way, the School of the Persians became a problem only once it had become a "school" closer to our sense of the word, that is, an institution and a school of thought. Only when the School came into view due to its theological conservatism and its incipient institutionalization did it then seem an imminent threat to those who eventually shut it down.

These Edessene trends continued in Nisibis. The School's internal cohesion increased even more on its arrival there when the community took up formal rules. Its theological tendency was solidified with the Church of the East's formal acceptance in canon law of Theodore of Mopsuestia as *the* exegetical authority. However, all this occurred in another city and another school, the School of Nisibis, and therefore belongs to another chapter.

The closure of the School of the Persians occurred in 489, by order of the Emperor Zeno and under the auspices of the Bishop of Edessa, Cyrus. This is the most trustworthy and consistent version of the story. Vööbus sets out the different views on the date of the School's closure. He divides the secondary literature into scholars who support a date of departure of 489 and those who place it in 457.[70] However, few of these works make specific arguments for their positions and most merely follow the dating according to the source at hand. After his own analysis of the sources and the differing scholarly positions, Vööbus concludes that there were two exoduses from the School of the Persians, the first in 471 by Narsai and a second, larger one in 489.[71] Vööbus's argument in this section is rather confused and there are numerous problems with the evidence he uses.[72]

One factor that led to Vööbus's confusion is that he failed to take into account the tendency of each source. He imagines a mass exodus of teachers and students from the *Cause*, and then from this thinks that the *Ecclesiastical History* must be describing a different event because its version of the story of Narsai is more personal.[73] Because Vööbus fails to see the institutional bias of the *Cause* (as well as the "lonely persecuted" bias of the *Ecclesiastical History*),[74] he thinks that the exodus it describes must be radically different from the exodus of Narsai from the city. However, none of the sources refer to two exoduses, and only two of them, the *Cause* and the *Ecclesiastical History*, give any kind of detail about the

event. Vööbus essentially mistakes the confusion of the sources for a confusion of reality and thus makes things far more complex than they need to be.[75]

In contrast to Vööbus, I would argue that the sources point to one exodus. Their obscurity is what would lead one to assume that there were two. Three distinct sources mention the Emperor Zeno's involvement in the closure (Simeon of Bēt Aršam, Jacob of Sarug, and Theodore Anagnostes), which would probably have been related to the continual tension on the border with Persia. A school of Persians may have sounded suspicious enough (perhaps, alas, as it would today!). Furthermore, the eradication of a bastion of Nestorianism would have been helpful to the emperor's attempts at pleasing the anti-Chalcedonian Miaphysite party, as his Henotikon in 482 was. Aside from the emperor, the Bishop Cyrus is mentioned by even more sources as being involved in the School's closure.

The only truly useful and detailed source for the local dynamic at the time of the closure of the School is the report in the *Ecclesiatical History*'s "Life of Narsai."[76] This source is convoluted, but in its confusion—and in fact because of its confusion—there seems to be some truth to it. This report requires further study, but that study must be done as part of a larger examination of the *Ecclesiastical History* as a whole, a work which has not been examined enough. Moreover, any further study of the closure of the School will need to incorporate broader comparative evidence for the imperial relationship with the provinces and the contemporary power of the bishop. Also, the closure of the School of the Persians in 489 immediately calls to mind the closure of the pagan Neoplatonist school in Athens in 529 by the emperor Justinian.[77] Finally, the relationship of the various sources might also be further examined. For example, one striking feature of the different sources is their use of similar terminology. The School was "uprooted" (Syr. root *ʿ-q-r*) according to several disparate sources,[78] which fits with Philoxenus's usage of roots and plant imagery in his description of heresy.[79] Furthermore, several sources, both West- and East-Syrian, pun on the name of the city Nisibis when they say that the School was "planted" (*n-ṣ-b*) there.[80]

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to present the evidence for the School of the Persians in a different light. Hopefully this will result in a new understanding not only of the School of the Persians but also of the relationship between the School of the Persians and the later School of Nisibis. As will be seen in the following chapter, despite the historiographical efforts of both its friends and its enemies, the School of Nisibis was in

many ways discontinuous with the School of the Persians. This discontinuity can be seen in the content of the two Schools' studies; in their relationships to other institutions, such as the ecclesiastical structure and the broader monastic movement; and in their formal institutional development. The evidence for discontinuity counters Vööbus's emphasis on the School of Nisibis's immediate dependence on and derivation from the "School of Edessa." In contrast, I would argue that in the School of Nisibis we see both the intensification of previous developments from the School of the Persians (e.g., a formalizing of the internal hierarchy of teachers) and the development of completely new realms of study (e.g., Aristotle), as well as a new relationship with the church at large.

Further work on this subject could go in several directions. First, closer examination of the Armenian material from the fifth century would offer a perspective on Edessa that is obscured in, and even at times lost from, the Syriac sources. Second, the ongoing scholarly synthesis of the writings of Ephrem in the fourth century and the sources for Rabbula in the fifth century might illustrate the state of the Church at the time of the development of the Schools.[81] Along with this work, an examination of manuscripts might offer an interesting vantage point to the intellectual-scribal culture of the day (for example, British Library Add. 12150, produced in Edessa in 411). Finally, comparative evidence might ameliorate the problems in the study of Edessa caused by the paucity of material. Jerusalem, Beirut, and Athens were intellectual centers in Late Antiquity: are there similarities between the intellectual circles, some of them ethnically based, which developed in these cities and in Edessa? The differentiation and eventual expulsion of the School of the Persians from the larger Edessene Christian community should be understood not in purely dogmatic terms but as a social process taking place within and around a social institution. It is my hope that future work in this area will find greater heuristic value in a sociological analysis and ignore the inevitable claims of the sources, which are guided by a polemical impetus and an interest in a transcendental truth irrelevant to the historian.

*Chapter 4*

# The School of Nisibis

Īšō'yahb to Hormizd, my brother in our Lord, peace.
You were extremely bold, oh Chaste One, and offered a great abundance for the increase of my patience. May Your Chastity then pray that for all the disgrace of Your Wisdom a recipient like unto me be present, so that there will perhaps remain for you in the length of time a remnant of those who love you. For while I myself receive with pleasure your childish bites upon the body of my thoughts, I endure greatly, lest I am ever forced by a change of [character][1] to be deprived of the sweetness of my patience, while I am engaged in answering the nonsense which is in your letter with the praises which fit Your Honor. Perhaps you are in doubt as to whether, if I am willing, this is able to happen. May God give to you wisdom in everything and may he empower you to guard the unity of love with a bond of peace.[2]

This loving, humorous, and playfully convoluted letter was written by the bishop of Mosul (620–28) to his friend and cellmate from their days at the School of Nisibis (*bar qelāytā da-b-eskōlē da-nṣībīn*). Īšō'yahb would later become Metropolitan of Arbela and finally, as Īšō'yahb III, the Catholicos of the Church of the East (650/1 or 647/8–657/8). In Duval's edition of the letters, Hormizd is the individual who receives the most of Īšō'yahb's letters.[3] The above letter indicates how an intimate social bond could develop within the School of Nisibis, and the friendship which it attests may serve as an example of one link in the complex social network created and maintained within the School and in the East-Syrian schools in general.

The School of Nisibis was founded after the expulsion of the community of "Nestorian" Persian Christians from Edessa in 489. Within only a few decades its fame would reach the Western Mediterranean and it would begin to play a foundational role in the intellectual and ecclesiastical life of the Church of the East. In this chapter I will discuss the establishment of the School of Nisibis and provide a preliminary description of its workings, including its curriculum.

## The Establishment and Endowment of the School of Nisibis

New social institutions are not created *ex nihilo.* Precedents are needed. Put simply, what was the model for the establishment of the School of

Nisibis? The School of Nisibis, both in its founding and in its continuous embellishment during the course of the sixth century, shares many aspects with contemporary monastic institutions. However, many of the sources draw a close relation between the School of Nisibis and the School of the Persians in Edessa. At one point the *Cause* states: "Edessa grew dark and Nisibis gave forth light."[4] Implicit in this line and explicit in the *Cause*'s linking of Edessa and Nisibis is the notion that the School of Nisibis was the successor to the School of the Persians in Edessa. However, when the *Cause* and the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā are read synoptically it becomes apparent that the *Cause*, which is later than and apparently dependent on the *Ecclesiastical History* or some shared source, streamlines the historical narrative and creates a communal movement from Edessa to Nisibis. Furthermore, in the previous two chapters I made the case that the level of institutionalization in the School of the Persians was much lower than scholars have previously thought, and that this scholarly error is partly due to a failure to recognize that the sources tend to project sixth-century Nisibene institutions onto fifth-century Edessa. In sum, there is far more novelty and innovation within the School of Nisibis and a greater discontinuity between it and that of the Persians in Edessa than the sources would have us believe.

I do not intend to produce a detailed analysis of the establishment of the school in Nisibis, especially since it has been discussed thoroughly elsewhere.[5] Stephen Gero has made a cogent case for believing the tradition found in several sources that Barṣaumā, the bishop of Nisibis, played a major role in inducing Narsai to remain in the city on his arrival there and in supporting the establishment of the School.[6] Despite the sources that seem to envision a smooth continuity between Edessa and Nisibis, one tradition attests to an institution that existed in Nisibis prior to the closure of the School of the Persians and should therefore be examined more closely. The *Ecclesiastical History* states:

> He (i.e., Barṣaumā) bought a school, a caravansary (lit. a place of camels) on the side of the church, and because there had been a school there previously and an interpreter (*mphašqānā*) from Kaškar, whose name was Simeon, a great and excellent man, there was no hindrance in this matter.[7]

Depending on how one reads the following three lines, the *Ecclesiastical History* might even be suggesting that Simeon's students then joined Narsai's school.[8] This tradition is repeated by the *Chronicle of Siirt*:

> Then he (i.e., Narsai) fled to Nisibis, where he came upon the little school set up by Simeon al-Jramqānī, and he established himself there. The metropolitan Barṣauma was interested in it and assisted his undertaking.[9]

That Simeon was from Kaškar, modern Wasit in Iraq (not to be confused

with the later, more famous Kashgar, now in modern Xinjiang), is not surprising: a large number of important figures came from this city throughout the sixth century, and a tradition of learning was associated with it. The *Acts of Mār Mārī* offers an alternative version of the story of the founding of the School, describing it as being established in the apostolic age, but this story is clearly a later development probably dating from after the Arab conquest.[10]

The Simeon tradition is important because it raises the question of whether there was a tradition of schools in the Church of the East prior to the establishment of the School of Nisibis. As the prosopography of the Church of the East in the sixth and seventh century attests, the School of Nisibis was extremely influential, not least in the spread of East-Syrian schools. But were there previous schools? Furthermore, in lexicographical terms, was the word "school" (Syr. *eskōlē*) used in Mesopotamia prior to the existence of the School of Nisibis?

The evidence for the Simeon tradition does not necessarily mean that there were schools in any formal sense, especially institutions of higher learning, prior to the foundation of the School of Nisibis. Perhaps Simeon's "school" was more like the village schools, which will be discussed in Chapter Eight.[11] Certainly the School of Nisibis was something new: it is by far the earliest attested institution of higher learning with formalized rules and a hierarchy of teachers. As Gero notes, "the life of the school was meant to approximate that of a strictly regulated cenobitic monastery."[12]

The establishment and financial endowment of the School of Nisibis were comparable to those of monasteries in the same period made by both clergy and laity. As Cynthia J. Villagomez notes in her dissertation on the economic life at Nestorian monasteries: "The founding of the school of Nisibis in the last quarter of the fifth century is an early case of ecclesiastical patronage supporting a particular institution."[13] Such economic foundations were important for the development of a distinct East-Syrian identity.[14] The economic basis of the School had two parts: 1) the establishment of the School in its own distinct building by the bishop of the city and 2) the endowment and new construction projects, as well as safeguards set up within the School's canons to ensure that students were provided for by their own labors.

In the "Life of Abraham" in the *Ecclesiastical History* we are told how Abraham of Bēt Rabban, the director of the School (510–569),[15] built a hospice (*xenodocheîon*).

> When first he built for them a *xenodocheîon* so that they not stray in the city and be dispersed and mocked, as that one who said: *Who is sick and I myself am not sick?* (2 Cor 11:29); he piled up and set therein all kinds of things and he filled it for them with all the necessities. Three times a day he would visit the sick who were

in it, according to the Lord's saying, which says: *I was sick and you visited me* (Mt 25:36).[16]

The creation of this hospice fits with monastic tendencies in the West, but also with the Syriac focus on the tradition of the "stranger" (Syr. *aksenāyā*, Gr. *xénos*).[17] Furthermore, it may reflect a growing interest in medicine at the School, which is attested by the reference to the study of medicine in the School canons.[18] Abraham himself probably took on the financial burden of this construction, and since he was able to fill the hospice "with all the necessities" he probably came from a family of some means. However, the expense of running the hospice was significant and the School was in need of more cells. Apparently, a number of members lived in cells away from the School itself and had trouble working to pay for their room and board.[19] Both of these expenses were allayed through the patronage of Qašwī, a medical doctor of the shah.

On account of this after the blessed one of the Lord saw all these things and others like them, he sought a place (to build in) from Qašwī, the believer and doctor of the king, and when he gave it to him, he busied himself and built eighty cells at his own expense, and he divided it into three courts. He built there baths, one for the honor of the brothers, the second for the expenses of the *xenodocheîon*. Because there was not yet a place from which the reader (*maqryānā*) and the elementary instructor (*mhagyānā*) could be sustained, he bought a village for a thousand staters and ordered that the proceeds of it go to the teachers, and if there was any surplus from that, it would go to the *xenodocheîon* of the brothers.[20]

It seems the members of the School maintained their distance from the larger community, even in quotidian activities like bathing. It should be borne in mind that baths would have been a major architectural endeavor, one appropriate to an institution with a village as parts of its endowment.[21] Qašwī's endowment corresponds with the shift we find between the earlier and later canons of the School: by the end of the sixth century residence at the School itself was required, room and board were provided for, and contact with the town was not smiled upon.[22]

Qašwī's endowment to the School seems to reflect a traditional euergetist system of patronage, while he himself belongs to the tradition of Christian doctors who used their proximity to the shah in order to patronize their religious community, the most famous being Gabriel of Sinjar, the West-Syrian physician who, via his connection to Khosro II (d. 628), wreaked havoc upon the Church of the East in the early seventh century.[23] That a village could be "bought" and then given to the School is distinctive of the Persian feudal system,[24] but also demonstrates the relative comfort East-Syrian institutions felt with wealth.[25] This is all the more striking if we recall the emphasis on monastic poverty in Syriac spiritual literature. Stories such as that of the creation and financial endowment

of the School of Nisibis are in fact common in the history of the Church of the East. Elite clergy and laity played an influential, and at times controversial, role in the life of the church by means of the financial leverage they could bring to bear. For example, as we will see in Chapter 9, Išōʿyahb III (661–680/681) attempted to endow the monastery of Bēt ʿĀbē with a school, after he had already built a "new temple" (i.e., nave) there.[26] But he was also known among the West Syrians for bribing the authorities to forbid West Syrians from building at Mosul.[27] Like Abraham of Bēt Rabban at the School of Nisibis, George I, the Catholicos who succeeded Išōʿyahb III, came from an affluent family and gave the village of Bēt Ḥabbā, out of his very own family estate, to the monastery of Bēt ʿĀbē.[28]

There is also strong evidence of the lay patronage of monasteries. One extreme example is the story of a mid-eighth-century Persian, "Ḥugayr the believing nobleman," who, "wishing to emulate good and prosperous men" "named the monastery [which he built] by the Persian name of 'Ḥūgayr-ābād,' after the manner of the Magians from whose race he had sprung." He then entreated the metropolitan to go to the monastery with "teachers and school students." [29] Averse to the pride (and implicit paganism) behind the monastery's construction and Ḥūgayr's naming it after himself, the metropolitan refused to consecrate the building.

The establishment of the School of Nisibis had its idiosyncrasies: an institution that had been developing in Edessa was suddenly shut down and then refounded in the location of a prior place of learning. However, the economics of its establishment fit within the broader economy of church and monastic patronage in the Church of the East. This connection to the monastery becomes more apparent on even the most superficial examination of the School's canons, which were clearly based on those of the monastery.

## The Canons of the School of Nisibis

Several scholars have discussed the canons of the School of Nisibis.[30] By simply laying out the contents of these canons we have a better perspective on the structure and life of the School.[31] As they have been published by Vööbus, the canon collection consists of the following sections: the proem of 602, the canons of Narsai, the ratification under Abraham of Bēt Rabban, the canons of Ḥĕnānā from 590, and the ratification of 602.

The proem of 602 is similar to the colophon cited at the beginning of the introduction of this book in that it locates itself according to the regnal year of Khosro II, described as a divine king who is "preserved by the mercy from heaven," as well as by the bishop of the city, the metropolitan of Nisibis. In fact, all dates on these documents are according to the regnal and local episcopal years. After citing the date the members of

the community make a formal proclamation: "the prominent brothers, the interpreters (*bādōqē*), with the readers and the steward (*rabbaytā*) and the elementary instructor of the assembly of those who reside in Nisibis, whose names are written below" ask the metropolitan to reinstitute the canons of their predecessors at the School.[32] "Spiritual gain" is expected from this.

> But particularly we were prepared to come to this petition and supplication through the evil operation of Satan and through the multitude of the sins of the community in these hard and evil times which have happened to us – so that (all) in like manner were sifted in a sieve, and the true brothers were not recognized from the false ones.[33]

Although it acknowledges internal dissension within the School, in a manner reminiscent of the community rules from Qumran, the proem reveals this information in allusive, obfuscating language, leaving it to us to figure out who the "false brothers" and "insolent ones" are,[34] who are the "lightminded persons,"[35] and who are the "quarrelsome ones."[36] It is possible that the problems referred to in the proem relate to the dispute concerning Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene, which would eventually lead to the exodus of a large part of the student population in the early seventh century; however, at this point we can only speculate about the referents in this text.

According to the proem, the first set of canons, dated to 496, was in fact a second attempt at instituting rules for the School.[37] These former "Canons of Narsai" are as follows:

Canon 1: On the selection of the steward (*rabbaytā*).

Canon 2: The steward (*rabbaytā*) must work with others and not rule arbitrarily.

Canon 3: Transgressions that lead to expulsion from the School and the town: taking of a wife, adultery, fornication, theft, witchcraft (*ḥarrāšūtā*), unorthodox views, and "vanities" ("slander, plotting, confusion, lies, intrigue" at banquets, and "contention of rebellion" [*estasīrūtā*, from Greek *stásis*]).

Canon 4: "Those brothers who are in the school are not allowed to go over to the country of the Romans without precept and order of the brothers and that of the *rabbaytā* of the school for the cause of the instruction (*yullphānā*) nor because of a pretense of prayer, also not in order to buy or to sell."[38]

Canon 5: "No one of the brothers shall practice business (Gr. *pragmateía*) or craft. But if it is necessary to buy and sell (then) from the month ʿĀb

until Tešrī qadīm[39] outside of Nisibis in other countries. In Nisibis, however, except the workers (*pā'lē*), they are not allowed to practice business. A craft however, that is not shameful, they may work for three months."[40]

Canon 6: Against usury.

Canon 7: On instruction upon entrance into the community.

Canon 8: "The brothers, however, who (already) are in the rank of the *eskōlāyē* are not allowed to cease from writing, reading (*hegyānā*) and interpretation of the school and the 'recitation of the choirs' (*qeryānā d-sī'āthā*) without an urgent affair."

Canon 9: "In the time, however, of the great *mawtbā* when they have recited the psalm of the evening, everyone shall go into his cell. And when the cock crows everybody shall come and take (his) place. The one that was taken from the evening is not valid. Those, however, who come at the cock's crow shall leave one row before the bench to be for the brothers-presbyters, and shall take places in the other row."[41]

Canon 10: Brothers cannot live alone or with only one other brother.

Canon 11: Cellmates shall take care of a sick cellmate.

Canon 12: Differences should be settled within the community and not at a "court of the outsiders" (i.e., a secular court), unless permission is granted.

Canon 13: Ejection from community and town of those untrained who cause confusion by speaking out of turn.

Canon 14: On the required notification concerning lost or forgotten possessions.

Canon 15: If a brother does not tell the steward when another brother fails to change his ways after being corrected by him, then that brother receives the same punishment as the brother he corrected.

Canon 16: On punishment for false accusation.

Canon 17: On witnesses to a will.

Canon 18: On punishment for violence against a brother.

Canon 19: On the fourth offense a brother is expelled from the community and the town.

Canon 20: "But the *maqryānē* and the *mhagyānē*, those in the school, if they despise and neglect the order of reading by syllables (*hegyānā*) and reading (*qeryānā*) that is laid upon them, without a reason of sickness and permission of our *rabban*, they shall receive a rebuke; sustenance which they are entitled to receive, is withheld from them; and they cannot be present to hear the judgement of the school."[42]

Canon 21: Those who do not accept punishment but rather seek outside aid from clergy or laity shall be driven from the town.

Canon 22: If the steward does not follow these rules he will give the School ten dinars of gold and leave both the community and the town.

These canons were ratified during Abraham of Bēt Rabban's tenure of the office of head exegete (d. c. 569).[43] Then again later during the tenureship of Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene in 590 further canons were added.[44]

Canon 1: Institution of the office of warden of the hospice (*xenodocheîon*). Financial matters arranged along with "the Teacher" (i.e., the *rabban*). Fine and expulsion from community and town for failure to fulfill his responsibilities.

Canon 2: So long as space permits, no one shall stay in town.

Canon 3: The steward is responsible for feeding the brothers and serving as their patron. He shall not go to town.

Canon 4: "No one shall leave under the pretext of righteousness the dwelling-place with the brothers and go out and build for himself a hut outside the town or by the side of the town, but shall keep the lawful dwelling place. If he desires to excel he may go into a monastery or into the desert."[45]

Canon 5: Brothers must have an excuse to miss study times. The "heads of cells" or the steward are to seek them out when missing.

Canon 6: Brothers who leave before finishing or who break the rules, "shall not share in the law of the community of the school." Yet their honor is greater than seculars, if they deserve it.

Canon 7: "The brothers who excel in the learning and further appear (that they are) able to teach others, and are ordered by the *mallphānā* to go and to teach, and because they are possessed by the school and the long stay which they had in the town, it is difficult for them to separate, are not allowed to be in the school, not even to stay in the town."[46]

Canon 8: Expulsion from community and town for stealing or changing books or erasing the names of deceased brothers (e.g., from a colophon).

Canon 9: "Of the brothers who live together, each of them shall not eat bread by himself, but their life (*dubbārhōn*) shall be in common as their study (*yullphānhōn*)."

Canon 10: "In the time of harvest or (season of) the workers, no one shall calumniate his companion and in his wretchedness, because of his avidity, shall not turn and deny the stipulation which he previously had made with his brothers regarding the work."[47]

Canon 11: On not missing the vigils or services for the dead and the punishment for this.

Canon 12: "The brothers who come to the school because of study, are not allowed to found a school of boys in the town so that they may not be ensnared by other (things). Those, however, who seem not to be able to work whether because of age or because of weakness, shall be permitted to obtain up to 2 or 3 boys; if they are found that they take more than this number, they shall be excommunicated by the school, they and their disciples also."[48]

Canon 13: Restriction and punishment of brothers who keep vigil in the town or eat at commemorations (of saints?).

Canon 14: The steward should care for those good schoolmen who are too weak or sickly to work. "However, they are not allowed to beg from the believers, to ask something at the door of the rich ones or among the women, under the pretext that they were sent from our *rabban* or from the *rabbaytā* or from the outstanding brothers."[49] Expulsion from community and town for infraction.

Canon 15: "The brothers who come to the instruction before the time indicated for the reading of the words of the books and the hearing of

the meaning (of them) shall not give themselves to the reading and hearing of the group. These shall be tested with the canon by the *rabbaytā* and outstanding brothers."[50]

Canon 16: "The brothers who are in the school, so long as they are in the school, shall not eat in the taverns and restaurants, they shall also not arrange picnics and drinking parties in the gardens and parks, but shall endure all in their cells as is becoming for the purpose and the manner (*eskēmā*) of their *qyāmā*."[51]

Canon 17: "Along with learning the brothers of the school shall be diligent also over the *eskēmā* of the dress and hair: they shall not shave entirely, also they shall not grow curls like the seculars but they shall go about within the school and on the streets of the town in chaste tonsure and dignified[52] dress that is far from luxury, so that through these both they shall be known to everybody—, to the stranger and to those belonging to the household."[53]

Canon 18: Brothers will be expelled from community and town for interacting with women either in teaching them or in long conversation, including the *benāt qyāmā* (consecrated lay virgins).

Canon 19: Brothers and physicians are not allowed to live together lest "books of the craft of the world" "be read with the books of holiness."[54]

Canon 20: Brothers who left School instruction for medicine are not permitted back into the School unless there is good testimony about them or they are actually from the town.

Canon 21: Brothers may not shelter captives or protect runaway slaves, lest harm come to the community.

In a second ratification from 602, the same date as the original proem, the whole community confirms these preceding canons, which are to "be placed in the guardianship in the house of the school, and shall be read one time before the entire community year after year so that the assiduous ones may become more diligent from hearing them read," and the lazy might be corrected and encouraged.[55] All then place their seals on the document. The yearly reconfirmation ritual again is reminiscent of the Qumran community.[56]

A close study of the canons of the School of Nisibis would no doubt be integral to reconstructing, among other things, the daily life of the School of Nisibis; its economy (and the role of the steward in it); its hierarchy, and the competition, even rivalry, among the brothers;[57] and the

level of social integration that existed between the School and the city of Nisibis itself. The similarities between the *Cause* and the canons, for example, in terminology and theology, could also be analyzed.

For now let it suffice to state that the canons of the School, like monastic canons, created a scholarly *habitus* for the members that provided them with distinct notions of space, time, dress, correct social hierarchy and interaction, legitimate ownership of property, and mission. The scriptures of Moses and the Prophets are hardly mentioned in the canons, and the logic of Aristotle not at all. Simply taking these canons as the rules of a community that was interested only in ideas is to miss the embodied nature of the way of life of the School. The strictures imposed on the life of the *eskōlāyē* differentiated them from other Christians and the citizens of Nisibis and played a role in the scholars' development into a semi-distinct social group within the larger Christian community.

## Study at the School of Nisibis and Its Curriculum

Since this social group's characteristic activity was study we can better understand them by attempting to reconstruct their curriculum. However, the term "curriculum" needs to be qualified in order to avoid an anachronistic understanding of how the School functioned. Some evidence suggests that different levels of learning existed at the School correlating to the different offices held, and furthermore, some of the documents to be discussed below attest a focus on different parts of scripture at different stages in the learning process. However, the only formal curriculum of study that can be identified with some certainty is the movement of students between the different ranks of instructors. This was probably more of an informal process, similar to that of the tranmission of knowledge in classical antiquity, rather than a system of accreditation such as we find in modern learning, where the student's movement forward by degrees is based less on individual virtuosity and more on the academic calendar and completion of a part of the curriculum by the class as a whole.

The structure of the formal curriculum may be speculatively sketched out from the different offices of the School and presumably those of other more developed schools (such as we find in the School of Tel Dīnawar discussed in Chapter Eight).[58] The sources mention the following offices: the steward (*rabbaytā*), who was an administrator in charge of the daily routine of the School; the elementary instructor (*mhagyānā*); the reader (*maqryānā*); and finally the exegete (*mpḥašqānā*). As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a striking parallel between the tripartite system of elementary instructor, reader, and exegete and the similar system found in classical education, in which a student would move from an elementary instructor to a grammarian and then to either a rhetorician or a philosopher. This parallel may suggest that the tripartite system

had its origin in Edessa; however, this depends to a certain extent on how hellenized we imagine Nisibis to be at the time of the foundation of the School. It is possible that some form of Greek learning was present there, as the fourth-century Greek inscriptions from the Church of Mār Jacob (of Nisibis) would suggest.[59]

Other titles which seem to have been less clearly defined also appear in the sources: the teacher (*mallphānā*), which was apparently not a distinct office but a title given to various members of the School; the interpreter (*bādōqā*), more specialized than a "teacher" but also not clearly defined in the sources;[60] and the "schoolman" (*eskōlāyā*), a term applicable to a broad range of figures: an elementary student, a more advanced student, or even a learned person associated with the School. It is a "schoolman" on the banks of the Tigris who, according to the *Life*, inspired Mār Abā to become a Christian (as described in Chapter One), and the name remained a term for the designation of status within the Church of the East for centuries to come.[61]

The School's students would have acquired their first literacy (and a basic religious knowledge) from instruction in the reading of the psalms. As with the system of classical learning, the basic course of literate education entailed acquiring an acquaintance with the letters of the alphabet, the sounding out of words from combined letters, and introductory methods of how to read a manuscript.[62] A passage from Thomas of Edessa's *On the Birth of Christ* describes the whole process, from basic literacy to the copying of manuscripts, and we find the development of literacy employed as a metaphor in the *Cause* itself as well as elsewhere.[63] Judging from the etymological meaning of his title, which suggests "reading syllable by syllable,"[64] the *mhagyānā* taught elementary aspects of reading and writing, while the reader (*maqryānā*) provided more advanced lessons.

It is not clear where the work of the reader ended and that of the exegete (*mphašqānā*) began. This is again similar to what we find in the classical system, in which the students would often begin to acquire the principles of rhetorical theory from the grammarian prior to their move over to an actual rhetor.[65] The exegete seems to have been the main authority in the interpretation of scripture, along with certain writings such as the commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia. His office also involved leading the "choir" (Syr. *sīʿtā*, literally meaning "troop" or "group"), although it is not clear what this activity entailed.[66] The biographical tradition of Narsai states that when he was asked to lead the School of the Persians in Edessa, he declined until the burden of serving as elementary and intermediate teacher was removed from the office.[67] The *Cause* states that his other responsibility, besides interpretation, was leading the choir.

But if you make a reader (*maqryānā*) and an elementary instructor (*mhagyānā*), I will perhaps be able to interpret. After they did everything that he asked, then that blessed man led the assembly for a time of twenty years, while daily leading the choir and giving interpretation (lit. he spoke choir and interpretation).[68]

The *Cause* attributes the same responsibility to Abraham of Bēt Rabban.

After he (i.e., John of Bēt Rabban) went to rest due to the great plague,[69] all of the burden remained on Mār Abraham. With great fasting, continual prayer, mighty vigils, and constant labors night and day, he led the assembly for a period of sixty years, while interpreting, leading the choir, and resolving questions. He also composed commentaries on the Prophets, Ben Sirach, Joshua bar Nun, and Judges.[70]

That the exegete led both the interpretation and the "choir" may further demonstrate the conflation of scriptural meaning and liturgical action in study at the School. Furthermore, we should recall that the very genre of interpretation that Narsai (as well as Jacob of Sarug and Ephrem) was engaged in was a poetic liturgical practice. Numerous *mēmrē*, or poetical homilies, attributed to Narsai are extant, many of which he would have chanted before the congregation of students.

A survey of the types of literature produced by members of the School demonstrates the intellectual tendencies of the institution as a whole and may tell us more about the curriculum of study.[71] The four dominant forms of literature produced by members of the School of Nisibis are biblical commentaries, liturgical works, cause literature, and polemical and apologetic treatises.

By far the most common works were commentaries on scripture.[72] The sources are obscure, but attest a school "tradition" (*mašlmānūtā*) of exegesis.[73] In fact, as discussed in Chapter Three, the evidence from the *Cause* suggests that part of the exegetical tradition of the School of Nisibis was continuous with that of the School of the Persians. Narsai's corpus of *mēmrē* is large, and many of these texts entail close readings of biblical passages. Unfortunately, despite a massive number of testimonia and fragments, none of the numerous exegetical works of the heads and members of the School through the sixth and into the seventh century are extant. This "Silence of the Sources," as it has been called, is in part because these earlier works were displaced by the later exegetical collections from the eighth century onwards, such as the commentary on the Old and New Testaments of Īšō'dād of Merv, who quotes from many of the works composed in Nisibis at this time.[74]

Exegesis at the School changed through the sixth century in several ways. It seems that the indigenous poetic *mēmrā* genre—typified in the works of Ephrem, Narsai, and Jacob of Sarug—was soon given up for

prose. Along with the composition of prose commentaries, the question-and-answer genre, no doubt deriving from similar practices in Greek, was begun.[75] Furthermore, by the end of the sixth century, a form of "spiritual" exegesis usually associated with Alexandria rather than Antioch and the exemplary Antiochene exegete, Theodore of Mopsuestia, had crept into the East-Syrian exegetical practice and can be found in the fragments of Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene.[76] This coincided with the late sixth-century rise of "reform" monasticism, to be discussed in the last chapter. Broadly defined, it seems that the exegesis of the school movement tended to be more conservative and to cling more closely to the Antiochene heritage, while that of the monastery was more open to the spiritual exegesis closer to an Alexandrian practice.[77]

As has been suggested by others, Junillus Africanus's *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis*, a manual for biblical exegesis written in Latin by the *Quaestor Sacri Palatii* at Justinian's court in the 540s, may shed some light on the School's approach to scripture in the sixth century.[78] Writing in Constantinople, Junillus states that his work is based on the *Rules* (*regulae*) of Paul the Persian, "who was educated at the Syrian School in the city of Nisibis, where the Divine Law is taught in a disciplined and orderly fashion by public teachers in the same way that in a secular education grammar and rhetoric are taught in our cities."[79] While it remains uncertain how much of the *Instituta*'s contents we can attribute directly to the School of Nisibis, suffice it to say that part of the formal approach that Junillus provides for studying scripture is in accord with the format of questions asked in the Neoplatonic prolegomena literature, the same literature which clearly lies behind the philosophical language and notions in the *Cause*, as will be examined in Chapter Seven.[80]

Despite the primacy of biblical exegesis, the strong liturgical focus of the East-Syrian schools was an aspect recognizable even to the East Syrians' enemies. For example, the *Life of Mārūtā*, the West-Syrian Metropolitan of Takrit (d. 649), describes the status of the East Syrians in northern Mesopotamia at the time of Mārūtā's childhood in the later sixth century.

> For the Nestorians of the East, while wanting to steal the simple for their error and to enchant the hearing of those laity who are very easily stolen by sweet melodies and modulations, but also for flattering the world and to rule over it, as well as to eat in this the houses of widows and *hypocrites*, according to the saying of the Gospel (Mt 23:13), *with the pretext that they are lengthening their prayers*, they busy themselves and fix a school (*eskōlē*) in every one of their villages, so to speak. They order them with various chants, melodies, responses, and songs, which are in every one of their places in the same way.[81]

Members of the School produced a large corpus of liturgical works, as is appropriate considering what seems to be the East-Syrian schools' focus on vigils and group prayer.[82] These works, some of which are extant, serve

a variety of functions and include prayers of thanksgiving,[83] hymns of praise (*tešbḥātā*),[84] responses (*ʿunyātā*),[85] stanzaic poems (*madrašē*),[86] and diverse forms of supplication.[87] The liturgical reforms of Bābai of Gĕbīltā, to be discussed in Chapter Eight, figure into these types of composition. Along with these liturgical works there was also the "historical" inquiry into and commentary on the liturgy itself. ʿAbdīšōʿ attributes to Thomas of Edessa a "letter on *qālē*," that is, strophes with prefixed versicles that are chanted.[88] The Catholicos Īšōʿyahb I (582–595/6), who was head of the School from 565 to 568, has a number of works on the liturgy and church practice attributed to him, the one extant piece being his treatise on the *trishagion* (Is 6:3 as it appears in the liturgy).[89] Closely related to these liturgical interests, and also part of their exegetical focus, was the development of the so-called "massoretic" tradition of the School along with the beginning of grammatical study.[90] The concerns about the problem of homonymy reflect "the underlying need to preserve the religious text and to respect the exact pronunciation of the words used in the ritual."[91] An emphasis on correct reading as well as the occasional difficulties of the defective Syriac writing system required an extra effort on the part of students.[92]

Akin to the intellectual interests in the liturgy is the historical-etiological genre of cause literature, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. Cause literature primarily addressed the origins of different holidays, and therefore it was reflective of and instrumental to the School's blurring of the lines between study and prayer. However, inasmuch as the cause provides a clear presentation of the theology and historical perspective of the East Syrians, it may also be understood next to the numerous polemical and apologetic works produced in the School. These kinds of texts, although not part of the biblical curriculum of the School, point to the important role played by the School in training East Syrians to engage with their theological opponents, both Christian and non-Christian. In the *Life of Mārūtā*, mentioned above, after the text describes the liturgical focus of the East-Syrian schools, it then states that the West Syrians began to build schools in response, thus demonstrating how theological controversy was a major impetus for the spread of institutions of learning throughout the region.[93] This is in accordance with the polemical focus of a number of texts produced by figures at the School. There were treatises against the Magi,[94] against "heretics,"[95] against astrology,[96] against the Jews,[97] against Miaphysites,[98] and against Eutyches,[99] who was a figure associated with a radical Miaphysite position and was regularly referred to in attacks on all Miaphysite theology. We are told by ʿAbdīšōʿ that the probable author of the *Cause* himself, Barḥadbešabba, wrote "disputes (*drāšē*) with all religions (*deḥlān*) and their refutation."[100] These polemical works can be compared to a number of

references to apologetic texts composed by members of the School, such as Paul of Nisibis's "Disputation with Caesar" and Elisha bar Quzbāyē's defense of Christianity for the Shah Qawad, commissioned by the Catholicos Acacius himself (d. 496), who had himself studied in Edessa.[101] Sometimes we witness church members turning the tools of polemic and argumentation against their own, as occurred during the controversy surrounding the figure of Ḥĕnānā and his followers, which will be addressed below. Members of the School also worked in a number of other genres. It is unfortunate that the collections of letters attributed to members of the School are not extant, as they might offer still another perspective on its daily workings.[102]

Despite the rich intellectual culture of the School and contrary to the commonly expressed position in the secondary literature, there is no immediate evidence that the study of philosophy took place there. To be sure, we know that many East Syrians had a grasp of the *Organon* and its commentary tradition—the *Cause* itself, as I will show in Chapter Seven, is infused with philosophical material—but nowhere is there an explicit reference to the study of this material in any formal sense at the School. Study seems to have been limited to Aristotelian logic, an essential intellectual tool for a wide range of intellectual activity, including debate and theology. We should differentiate between philosophy in the stricter sense of the word and the use of philosophical arguments and concepts. The East Syrians relied heavily upon certain ideas, forms of argument, and approaches to interpretation deriving from philosophical texts. For example, as already stated, Junillus Africanus's *Instituta Regularia* advocates an approach to biblical books taken from the prolegomena tradition. However, the East Syrians' intellectual practices, which placed a strong emphasis on tradition and revelation, were not those of philosophers.

To add to our reconstruction of the kind of study practiced at the School of Nisibis, we have extant two formal descriptions of school curricula. These two texts confirm what we might expect Nisibis's curriculum to resemble, based upon the centrality of scripture and liturgy at the School. The first is preserved in ʿAbdīšōʿ bar Bĕrīkā's *Nomocanon,* a collection of synodical canons, and purports to be from the School of Nisibis, although Vööbus questions its authenticity.[103]

> In the first year if there is bread in the school the *mawtbā* shall be the second week that is after the Sunday "After Their burial"[104]; and if there is no bread in the school and the students have the need to eat from their labors, the second week that is after the Sunday "Not from the living."
> The first year they shall write the first part of the *bēt mawtbē,*[105] the book of Paul and the Torah.
> The one who teaches the chanting (*sīʿātā*) shall teach together with the lections of the table the funeral hymns.[106]

But in the second year they shall write the second part of the *bēt mawtbē* and David (i.e., the Book of Psalms) and the prophets; and together with the table of lections they shall learn the *'unyātā* (responsa) of the Mysteries.
In the third year the third part of the *bēt mawtbē* and the book of the New Testament, and together with the table of lections they shall learn the *'unyātā*.

If this passage is authentic and not a later composition from another East-Syrian school that was attributed to the School of Nisibis, then it tells us several things. First, the time of the semester was fit to the harvest as dated by the liturgical cycle. Second, scripture was divided into its larger constituent parts for purposes of study, and study entailed the copying of texts.[107] Finally, scriptural study went hand in hand with learning the liturgy.

The second formal description of a school curriculum is from the Upper Monastery in Mosul, which was long famous as a leading monastic center in the Church of the East.[108] Founded in the late sixth or perhaps early seventh century, the monastery was known for its library.[109] It was an influential place of learning, mentioned in the letters of Timothy I (Catholicos, d. 823), and still in existence in the mid- to later tenth century, when Emmanuel bar Šahhārē was a biblical exegete there.[110] A version of its canons is extant in Arabic.[111]

1. Every Friday instruction in writing takes place in it under the direction of one of the scholars from the priests first and then from the deacons, after both have realized what is their task.
2. The functionaries shall exhibit a pedantic care and during the time of spelling shall stand on their feet and listen attentively to the chapters.
3. In the service of the altar, every month one of the priests shall perform the service of the altar without the deacons.
4. In the school of al-Madā'in (i.e., Seleucia-Ctesiphon), the curriculum is divided into three (parts).
5. For the boys (or youth) who are about to strive for the ascent of their ranks, there is the little curriculum, and (also) for those who have not read the New Testament.
6. And if they have completed the New Testament and have started the Torah, the middle curriculum will be assigned.
7. And to those who are through with the *mawtbā*[112] and the prophets, the full curriculum shall be assigned.
8. The teachers shall love the pupils and give them good education, and stimulate (censure?) them and keep them in instruction.
9. And for the pupils there shall be obedience as the obedience of sons towards their fathers—and sonship in scholarship is more excellent than the sonship in nature.

This text, aside from demonstrating the close, sentimental relations that could develop in an East-Syrian school between teachers and students, further confirms what we find in the text ʿAbdīšōʿ attributes to the School of Nisibis.

Further analysis would allow us to reconstruct the classroom setting of the School. Certainly it would have been similar in a number of ways to the classical classroom, which has been a focus of recent study.[113] The *Cause*'s creation narrative of God teaching the angels to read, which we will examine in Chapters Six and Seven, provides us with a possible example of the elementary format of learning.[114] Apparently the teacher read the text aloud and then the class repeated it. Perhaps in the higher levels of instruction certain problems were solved by the teacher, the oral equivalent of the question-and-answer genre.[115]

The classroom would have differed from the classical one in that liturgical practice was part of the curriculum. This performance of religious ritual in the setting of learning, however, should not be seen as an exception to the students' and teachers' usual intellectual, classroom practice. This is not school prayer in the modern, secular sense. The study of scripture and the performance of liturgy are not distinct but rather are two sides of the same coin, since liturgy was also an object of study (and of course consisted in part of excerpts from scripture) and the study of scripture was scheduled around and treated as part of the liturgical calendar. As I will suggest in the following chapter with regard to the *Cause*, study itself seems to have been a form of devotion embedded in liturgical practice.

Finally there is the question of whether and to what extent medicine was studied at the School. This is an important issue, because, just as the study of philosophical texts at the School of Nisibis as well as other East-Syrian institutions of learning serves as a precedent to the rise in philosophical interests in the 'Abbāsid period, so too the East-Syrian study of medicine may be one of the intermediaries between ancient and Islamic medicine. In fact, the School of Nisibis has been introduced into an ongoing discussion of the origins of Islamic medicine.

In recent years scholars have questioned the tradition that there was an influential medical school in Jundishapur, a city in Khuzistan known in the Syriac sources as Bēt Lāpāṭ, and have suggested that such a school was a mythical invention of both ancient sources and contemporary scholars.[116] To be sure, the same anachronistic approach to premodern learning that I have criticized in the scholarship on the School of the Persians in Edessa and the School of Nisibis can be found in discussions of Jundishapur. One scholarly article even refers to the school there as "la première Institution scientifique iranienne bien organisée."[117] Gerrit Reinink has responded to these recent criticisms in part by putting forward the Nisibene material to provide precedent to the Jundishapur tradition.[118] During the sixth century medicine became part of East-Syrian learning, and Reinink essentially argues that medical study at Jundishapur originated in an East-Syrian school in the city.[119] Further study of

the Syriac reception of Greek medicine and its role as an early intermediary to the Arabic medical tradition is required.[120] Moreover, we need to account better for medicine's place in school and monastic settings. For example, the seventh-century monastic writer Simeon d-Ṭaybūtēh employs medical language in his spiritual writing, demonstrating that medicine was not solely an instrumental science aimed at healing human bodies.[121] It was often associated with philosophy in antiquity, and thus it is not surprising that the study of medicine was introduced at Nisibis along with the study of certain philosophical texts. Furthermore, that Qašwī, a major patron of the School, was a doctor may also have been an impetus for the establishment of medical study there.

It is striking that, according to Canons 19 and 20 of Ḥĕnānā, the study of medicine and the study of scripture, as well as the two different types of students who pursued them, were to be kept separate from one another.[122] It seems that the students of medicine were connected to the hospice that had been built under Abraham of Bēt Rabban but did not intermingle freely with their peers at the School.[123] Medicine was perceived to be a "craft of the world" (*ūmānūtā d-ʿālmā*), one that brothers seeking "learning" (*yullpānā*) had to avoid.[124] This fits with the tendency to prevent the students from having contact with anyone except their teachers and fellow students. The restrictions on outside reading and access to outsiders are analogous in the canons. Study at the School was thus a form of socialization, a process that created the "schoolman" as a semi-distinct social entity.

This "schoolman" would then enter a monastery, where he would build upon and go beyond the knowledge and method he acquired at the School, or he would go on to join the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Some students, however, would remain and be teachers themselves and compose in a diversity of literary genres. In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to end this chapter by looking briefly at the oeuvre of Michael the Interpreter and Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā, both of whom were contemporaries of Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene.

However hazy they may appear in the sources, the work and career of Michael the Interpreter (*bādōqā*) or the Teacher (*mallpānā*), as he is variously referred to, may provide some details on the intellectual life of the School.[125] Michael is mentioned by the *Chronicle of Siirt* as one of the members of the School who left at the time of Ḥĕnānā's tenureship of the office of head exegete.[126] Michael's fame was great enough that he is perhaps the same person referred to in the "Mēmrā on the Holy Fathers" by Rabban Sūrīn ("Mār Michael, the student of truth, a skilled scribe, speech is too small to repeat the tale of his story").[127] Unfortunately, like his West-Syrian predecessor, Sergius of Reš'aynā, Michael has had a number of compositions attributed to him by later tradition, and the

project of determining what he actually wrote remains incomplete.[128] According to ʿAbdīšōʿ, he composed a set of "questions (and answers) on scripture in three volumes (*šū'ālē d-ṣūrāt ktāb ba-tlāt penqyān*)."[129] This work is unfortunately lost, but there are later extant examples of such a genre, which was taken up into Syriac from Greek usage from the mid- to later sixth century onwards.[130]

Abramowski and Goodman have published "a treatise" attributed to Michael which lays out the problems the East Syrians had with their theological adversaries.[131] If this is by Michael, then it shows an awareness of the varied theological positions in the West, and yet it is more likely that this is simply due to the influx of these theologies into the East. The first part condemns the expression "Theotokos" (a bone of contention foundational to the development of "Nestorianism"), while the latter three parts address three different branches of Miaphysite thought.[132] Similarly, Bābai the Great, Michael's contemporary, shows a greater concern for and awareness of the Christological issues current in the West—and in Constantinople in particular—than, for example, we find in Barḥadbĕšabbā's sixth-century *Ecclesiastical History*. However, Bābai's and Michael's greater knowledge of theological subtleties was in part a response to the more recent West-Syrian inroads made into traditionally East-Syrian territory. Michael's theological "treatise" suggests a context of debate and the use of logic. For example, throughout he employs casuistic "if . . . then" statements to attack the positions of his adversaries.

Another work attributed to Michael is a treatise on man as a microcosm.[133] If this text goes back to Michael, it deserves further study, since it would provide us with another perspective on learning at the School. In its argument that the human being is a microcosm representative of the whole of creation this text provides a detailed discussion of being, time, the elements, and the body and soul, among other aspects of creation.

Another member of the School of Nisibis who left at the turn of the seventh century due to the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene was Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā.[134] Notably he too, like Michael, is referred to as an interpreter (*bādōqā*). ʿAbdīšōʿ provides the following entry on Barḥadbĕšabbā in his *Catalogue*:

> Barḥadbešabba ʿArbāyā wrote a book of treasures in three parts, and disputes (*drāšē*) with all religions (*deḥlān*) and their refutation, and an ecclesiastical (history), and a cause of the followers (or "school" = *bēt*) of Diodore, and a commentary (*mašlmānūtā*) on Mark the evangelist and (the psalms of) David.[135]

This same Barḥadbĕšabbā may be the author of the *Cause*. In fact, it is possible that ʿAbdīšōʿ's reference to the "Cause of the Followers of Diodore" is a recherché reference to this text.

As is attested by the works of both Michael the Interpreter and Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā, the School of Nisibis was a major center of intellectual labor by the end of the sixth century. The diversity of their works is representative of the rich intellectual life at this time. The following three chapters will address more closely the intellectual life of the School through a detailed analysis of the *Cause.* Finally, the last two chapters will lay out the evidence for other East-Syrian schools and the broader monastic context in which the school movement developed, as well as the underlying tension that could exist between school and monastery. I will end the last chapter with a discussion of the apparent decline of the School of Nisibis in the early seventh century.

*Chapter 5*

# The Scholastic Genre: *The Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*

The pedagogical model, that is, the Christian tendency to understand Christianity as a form of learning, flourished in the Syriac milieu and culminated there in the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools*, a text which reduces all of human history to a long series of schools. The *Cause* and the genre to which it belongs are representative of the scholastic mentality of the School of Nisibis and the understanding of ritualized intellectual labor that was dominant there. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the *Cause* and situate it within the larger genre of East-Syrian cause literature. If any one of the genres in which the members of the East-Syrian school movement wrote encapsulates their understanding of the scholastic endeavor and the burgeoning school culture, it is the cause genre, the most striking example of which is the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools.*

The *Cause* is not a well-known work. Aside from Scher's French translation, published with the edition of the Syriac text, it has only recently been given serious scholarly attention.[1] Therefore, since most readers will not be familiar with it, some space should be devoted to summarizing the text as a whole. The *Cause* purports to be a speech given to the incoming students at the School of Nisibis. The speaker regularly refers to himself in the first person and employs a rhetorical self-presentation typical of Syriac literary texts, particularly those which display the influence of a Greek rhetorical style.[2] Accordingly, the author employs a large number of Greek words.

The text begins with a discussion of the goodness, wisdom, and power of God.[3] The speaker then describes God's grace toward himself and the assembly, and refers to the future mission of the students.[4] There follows a discussion on the nature of God and on the human capacity to learn about him. God is prior in existence to creation,[5] and on account of this he would be epistemologically inaccessible to us if he had not graciously permitted himself to be known.[6] He does this through the various distinctions which exist in nature; these distinctions, when lined up side by side, form a chain of being that connects all entities, including God himself,

to each other and allows us to compare them. In this way he allows himself to be spoken about by us with terms that also apply to the natural world.[7] The tools we employ to decipher the Creator through his creation are the human soul and the mind within it, the workings of which the author describes in detail. The human soul is like a lamp and the mind within it is illuminated by the divine light.[8] In relation to the other aspects of the human being the mind is as a captain on a ship,[9] guiding us while aiming at perfection of both intelligence and action and at its own purification.[10] The world we live in was created in order that the rationality of the mind might be able to decipher order from the diversity of creation and from this infer God the Creator.[11]

The higher beings, the angels, maintain their existence above this world.[12] Humans, who have the ability to ascend to and descend from these heights, are also given authority over creation,[13] but humanity fell because of the deceiver.[14] The creation of the world in six days was a lesson for the angels to learn about the Creator and serves as a model for all inferential learning about God in this world.[15] There are two types of angelic students: the lazy and the diligent. In what may be a subtle warning to the speech's audience of students who have newly arrived at the School, the text tells us how the lazy angels began to complain when God commanded them to pay honor to human beings and how on account of this they were beaten by their master and cast out of the school of heaven. In contrast, the diligent angels were given different positions within the celestial hierarchy.[16]

After describing the angelic classroom of creation, the *Cause* relates the long history of human schools, which began when God established a school for Adam in the Garden of Eden. Adam erases the law from the tablet he is given and is ejected from school.[17] The schools where Cain and Abel, Noah, and Abraham studied then follow.[18] When God makes Moses the Steward (*rabbaytā*) of the "great school of perfect philosophy,"[19] humans are no longer just pupils but begin to be instructors in their own schools.[20] Joshua receives this school from Moses; later, Solomon and the prophets have their own schools as well.[21]

The *Cause* then describes the schools of the different Greek philosophers, of the Zoroastrians, and of others who failed in their attempt to imitate the schools previously established by God.[22] After this period of decline, Jesus came and "renewed the first school of his father."[23] He "made John the Baptist a Reader and Interpreter (*maqryānā w-bādōqā*) and the apostle Peter the Steward (*rabbaytā*)."[24] The *Cause* goes on to describe the schools of Paul and the apostles;[25] the school of Alexandria, where scripture was first interpreted;[26] the various post-Nicene schools, including that of Theodore of Mopsuestia;[27] the School of Edessa until its closure;[28] and finally the foundation and the different heads of the

School of Nisibis.[29] The text then addresses the origins of the School of Nisibis's semester system[30] and ends with an exhortation to the students to work hard at the School[31] and an admonition to avoid contact with Satan, who would lead them astray.[32]

One way to divide the *Cause* into sections while still following its internal structure is to schematize it by its own rhetorical breaks. This provides us with seven uneven parts: (1) An introductory discussion on the grace of God, who makes all things possible[33]; (2) A philosophical discussion of God's nature, his angelic pupils, and the creation of man[34]; (3) A "scholastic" history running from Adam to the prophets[35]; (4) Pagan teachers' poor attempts at the imitation of their predecessors[36]; (5) Renewal of the original school under Jesus and the succession of schools up to the time of Theodore of Mopsuestia[37]; (6) The school in Edessa, its closure, and the move to Nisibis, followed by the various heads of the school there[38]; (7) A description of the school year, and an exhortation and admonition to the students.[39]

As I have discussed elsewhere, there has been considerable confusion about the author of the *Cause*, whether it was Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā or Barḥadbĕšabbā of Ḥalwān or even whether the two are the same person.[40] For the interests of this study, not much is at stake in which way this question is resolved. It is clear that the *Cause* was composed at the School of Nisibis between 581 and c. 610, more likely on the earlier side if the author is the same Barḥadbĕšabbā who left the School during the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene.

Related to the question of the authorship of the *Cause* is that of the text's relationship to the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā, that is, whether the former is dependent upon the latter or the two depend on the same sources.[41] There are a number of verbal parallels between the two texts which requires explanation one way or another. However, again this question becomes less relevant if we consider that the two texts were composed at approximately the same time at the School of Nisibis. Whether the *Ecclesiastical History* was composed by the same author several years before the *Cause* does not affect the way I would like to use these texts for studying the intellectual and institutional history of the School of Nisibis. In fact, the proximity between the two in date and possible authorship (or, at least, in sources employed) is all the more interesting when we consider the differences between the two texts. The story of the founding of the School is smoothed and streamlined over time between the composition of the *Ecclesiastical History* and that of the *Cause*.

The apparent dependence of the *Cause* on the *Ecclesiastical History* or its source is especially significant because it shows that the school model used in the *Cause*—that is, the understanding of the School of the Persians of Edessa as an institution for the transmission of learning with a formal hierarchy and chain of succession—has been superimposed upon

the story we find in the *Ecclesiastical History*. This school model is a later development of the sixth century, and thus it is necessary to be far more critical of the *Cause* as a source for fifth-century Edessene reality than previous scholars have been in their use of the text. In other words, the difference between the depiction of the history of the School of Nisibis in the two texts reflects the further institutional development of the School and in turn the crystallizing of a historical image that projects sixth-century institutions onto the past. This scholasticizing of the imaginative realm is characterized in the *Cause* both by its content and by the several genres in which it is constructed.

## The Genre of the Cause

The structure and content of the *Cause* would suggest that it is, or is meant to resemble, a speech given to the incoming students at the School of Nisibis. There are four different, yet not mutually exclusive, literary genres or modes of discourse by which the text may be understood: (1) the East-Syrian cause genre; (2) Greek protreptic; (3) the scholastic chain of transmission; and (4) collective biography.

### Cause

Its title as well as its contents suggest that the *Cause* belongs to the broader genre of cause literature produced within the Church of the East from the mid-sixth century onwards. The label "cause" derives from the Syriac word *ʿeltā* in the title of the numerous extant examples of testimonia to, as well as works in this genre. However, other words are used to translate *ʿeltā*, most notably "explanation" in William Macomber's edition of the six "explanations" of Cyrus of Edessa.[42]

There are several extant examples of this so-called "cause" genre from the sixth century,[43] but the only substantial work done on it has been Macomber's edition and translation of Cyrus's six "explanations": *On the Fast, On the Pascha, On the Passion, On the Resurrection, On the Ascension,* and *On Pentecost.* The other extant sixth-century causes are two by Thomas of Edessa (*On the Birth of Christ, On the Epiphany*);[44] one by Īšai, a teacher at the School of Seleucia, on the holiday commemorating the martyrs that falls on the first Thursday after Easter;[45] two by Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene (*On Golden Friday* [the first Friday after Pentecost], *On the Rogation* [i.e., on the different kinds of prayer]);[46] one by Pōsī (*On the Fast*);[47] and an anonymous one on Mary, attributed to "one of the teaching brethren of the School of Nisibis."[48] These all derive from a collection of "Explanations of the Feasts of the Economy," all copies of which go back to a sixteenth-century manuscript.[49] Finally, there is a text that seems to be a briefer example of the cause genre composed by Īšōʿyahb I (d. 595), a former

member of the School of Nisibis, on the *trishagion*, that is, Is 6:3 as it appears in the liturgy.[50]

The cause was clearly a genre associated with the schools, since Cyrus, Ḥĕnānā, Īšai, and Thomas are known figures from the school movement. Thomas and Cyrus were both disciples of Mār Abā, the mid-sixth-century Catholicos who is commonly associated with the school movement in the sources and who is also known for introducing Western texts and ideas into the Church of the East. Macomber argues that Cyrus's "explanations" were composed and delivered at the School of Seleucia and that the collection was made there, after which, he speculates, it was transferred to Nisibis, where it found its other parts.[51] These texts were later used by the West Syrian Moses bar Kēphā (d. 903) in his own *Causes of the Feasts*.[52]

Cyrus may have been the translator into Syriac of Nestorius's *Bazaar of Heracleides*, which was translated within the circle of Mār Abā (and which is also a source used by the *Ecclesiastical History*).[53] The translation of the *Bazaar*, like many of the extant instances of the cause genre, is prefaced with a series of questions about the text that derive from the questions asked in the Greek philosophical prolegomena tradition.[54] These questions seem to have become part of the literary approach of the school and were perhaps part of the curriculum.

Macomber cites several passages from the extant causes which he takes as evidence of the oral performance of the genre.[55] He suggests that the students would write the speeches down upon hearing them and later memorize them.[56] I accept Macomber's evidence, with the qualification that the texts' gestures to an audience, as in the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* itself, may be mere literary affectation. The elevation of an explicitly rhetorical style as an important literary characteristic makes it difficult to discern whether a speech was actually written to be given to a real audience. Some of the causes are rather long, and it is not clear how often the students would have heard such texts. The references to important figures in the audience in a number of them would suggest that they were written to be read on formal occasions, when all the members of the School were gathered together.[57] Since they focus often on particular holidays, perhaps they were read in preparation for or at the beginning of important days.

Aside from these extant works, the *Catalogue* of ʿAbdīšōʿ cites numerous other titles that are presumably instances of this genre. Some of these references tell us very little. For example, Īšōʿ bar Nūn (d. 828), Cyrus of Edessa, Šallītā of Rēšʿaynā, and ʿAbdīšōʿ I (d. 986), we are told, each wrote "causes."[58] However, the majority of the references to this genre contain further qualifiers. Some of the texts referred to by ʿAbdīšōʿ are the extant ones discussed above, such as those of Cyrus. Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene wrote "a cause of the festival of the Hosannas (i.e., Good Friday), a

cause of the Friday of Gold, and (one) of the Rogation, and (one) of the Discovery (of the Cross)."[59] Thomas of Edessa wrote "a cause of the Nativity and of the Epiphany."[60] Of his "eighty-three books" Bābai the Great wrote "a cause of the Hosannas"[61] and "a cause of the festival of the cross."[62] "He also made a book of causes, against Matthew the Wavering (of mind) (or, the Wanderer), Abraham of Nisibis, and Gabriel of Qatar."[63] Joseph Ḥazzāyā ("the Seer") wrote "causes of the glorious festivals."[64] Abraham of Māḥōzē composed "a cause of all the festivals."[65] Kyriakos of Nisibis wrote "a cause of the nativity and (one) of the epiphany."[66] Gregory of Šuštĕrā wrote "causes of the festivals" in the eighth century.[67]

The genre's focus on the "causes" of the festivals has already been addressed by Baumstark in his article reviewing this material.[68] He notes that in its several features, such as its fine style and evidence for Nestorian festival and liturgical practices, the genre provides a good example of Nestorian "dogmatics" in the sixth century.[69] With very few exceptions, such as Bābai's causes "against" certain persons, Baumstark's generalization holds true. The genre is devoted to the explanation of the two related areas of liturgy and festivals. This focus deserves special emphasis, as it has significant implications for how a text such as the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* would have functioned as well as for how the members of the School understood their own lives within this institution.

In the preface to his edition of the "explanations" of Cyrus of Edessa, Macomber writes:

> An "explanation" seems to represent a literary *genre* peculiar to the Nestorian theological schools of the 6th to the 8th centuries. It was a lengthy theological discourse that explained both the reasons for some liturgical or other celebration and different aspects of the theological mystery that lay behind it. Our collection is the largest group of "explanations" that has survived; it explains the principal feasts of the liturgical year. The only other "explanation" that remains is that of Barḥadbĕšabbā of Ḥelwān, which explains the opening of the scholastic year. However, ʿAbdīšōʿ of Nisibis informs us of the composition of numerous others that have perished. Cyrus of Edessa indicates that his "explanations" were originally delivered orally by his masters at the famous School of Nisibis and notes that the students were accustomed to copy them down; Thomas of Edessa seems to imply that they would even commit them to memory.[70]

In her *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, Eva Riad quotes this passage in full. However, she then explains:

> The origin of these *ʿellātā* is undoubtedly the many antiquarian histories of individual Greek communities called *Aitiae* that were written in Hellenistic times, the best known the Atthides, dealing with the antiquities of Attica. A principal concern of these works was to provide a historical explanation for the origin of such institutions as religious festivals and their celebrations.[71]

This connection to the etiological aspect of Greek historiography can be seen in other works. For example, in an article on the Greek historiographical context of the early sixth-century *Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite,* John W. Watt suggests that the purpose of the historical narrative set at the beginning of the work is "to inform the reader of the 'cause(s)' (*'ell(ā) tā*) of the most recent war between the Romans and the Persians, and in particular to demonstrate that its origin (*šurrāyā, archḗ*) goes back beyond Anastasius to an earlier time."[72] He also suggests that in the *Chronicle*'s use of the Syriac *'eltā* we can see a rendering of both Herodotus's *aitía* and Thucydides' *próphasis.*[73]

At this point I would hesitate to follow Riad's suggestions too closely—there is not enough evidence to support them—and Watt's argument, however interesting, may be drawing connections that are a bit too neat. The appearance of this genre in the mid-sixth century during or just after the time of Mār Abā and his circle, a group which had a number of connections with the Greek West, points to a Greek philosophical background for it. It is more likely that the origins of the historiographical interest of the genre lie in the similar historiographical focus that can be found in the introductions to the Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle. Further examination of this issue would entail an analysis of the different strata of etiological language, such as the use of the term "cause" (*'eltā*),[74] the common appellation of God as "Cause of All,"[75] and the philosophical notions of causality. Study of later etiological writing in Syriac, such as Job of Edessa's early ninth-century *Book of Treasures* and the tenth-century West-Syrian *Causa Causarum*[76] might also be useful.

The etiological interests of the cause genre can be seen in an earlier poetic form in the *mēmrē* of Narsai, which treat the different festival days.[77] Comparison of these homilies with the "explanations" of Cyrus demonstrates the close connection between the two. The main difference between them is that the former are metrical compositions while the latter are in prose, clearly attesting to the prominence that prose was gaining in Syriac literary composition in the sixth century with the influx of Western prose texts.

The *Cause* seems to belong to a subgenre of cause literature. For practical purposes I maintain the title given to the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* by Scher in his translation (i.e., *Cause de la fondation des écoles*). This is based upon the work's Syriac title in *some* of the manuscripts.[78] The Syriac, *'eltā da-syām mawtbā d-eskōlē,* is better rendered thus: "The cause of the establishment of the session of the school." The rationale for this translation will become clear below.[79]

There are several references in 'Abdīšō''s *Catalogue* as well as in the *Chronicle of Siirt* to works, no longer extant, bearing titles suggesting they may be of the same subgenre as the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools.*

ʿAbdīšōʿ tells us that Elijah of Merv wrote "a cause of the *mawtbē* (sessions)."[80] Mīkā composed "causes of the five *mawtbē*."[81] In the Arabic *Chronicle of Siirt* we are told that Elisha bar Quzbāyē composed "a cause of the establishment of the *mawtbā* in the school" (*sabab waḍʿ al-mawtb fī ʾl-eskūl*).[82] The *Catalogue* tells us he wrote "a cause of the *mawtbē* and (one) of the martyrs."[83] The *Chronicle* states that Abraham of Bēt Rabban composed a "speech on the order of the *mawtbā* in the school" (*kalām ʿalā tartīb al-mawtb fī ʾl-eskūl*).[84] In both these titles the translator of the *Chronicle* (or its source) used different Arabic words to render the Syriac *syām* ("establishment"). It seems that for the second title the translator misread the Syriac *ʿeltā* ("cause") as *meltā* ("word", "speech" = Arabic *kalām*), which is possible if the author thought the Syriac's *waw-ʿayin* was a *mīm*.[85] Thus, the original Syriac would have matched ʿAbdīšōʿ's notice for Abraham's work, "the cause of the *mawtbē* through summary chapters."[86]

The Syriac *mawtbā* derives from the root y-t-b, meaning "to sit," and is etymologically related to the Hebrew y-š-b, both going back to the proto-semitic *y-ṯ-b. *Mawtbā* can mean simply "a sitting," "a habitation," "a settlement," or even "a seat." For example, it is used for a bishop's see or throne. At Col. 1:16 the word is used in the Peshitta for the angelic "thrones" of the Greek. However, there seem to be three technical meanings which *mawtbā* can have as it is used by ʿAbdīšōʿ. First, it can have a liturgical meaning for a division of the psalms (corresponding to the Greek *káthisma*).[87] Second, it may refer to books of the Hebrew Bible not included in the Torah and the prophets (in layman's terms, the Syriac equivalent of the Jewish "Writings").[88] Third, *mawtbā* can mean "academic session or period" and thus serves as the Syriac equivalent of the well-known Hebrew term *yeshivah* (yĕšībhāh) and its Jewish Aramaic equivalent, *metivta*.[89] It has been argued that the meaning of *yeshivah/ metivta* in its academic sense shifted over time in Late Antiquity. Originally the word was used to refer to a study session, something more informal than an actual school. It was only later, perhaps in the Gaonic period, that it took on the meaning of "school," that is, a specific place of learning.[90] The Syriac *mawtbā* seems to have preserved this nonlocative earlier meaning; however at the same time it was used for a far more specific time of study, having a meaning equivalent to the English "semester."

It is not certain whether all "causes" of "*mawtbē*" refer to this third type (that of Mīkā, mentioned previously, could be to the different sections of the psalter), but those titles with *syām* or the Arabic equivalent seem to have this meaning. The Syriac idiom "to establish a session" (*lamsāmū mawtbā*) is used by the *Cause* for the establishment of the two "sessions" held at the School each year. This idiom in fact appears in a passage that occurs after the long history of learning that takes up the majority of the text:

This is the cause (*'eltā*) of the assemblies put in brief. The (academic) session (*mawtbā*) was arranged and established (*etsīm*) in the two seasons of summer and winter, not in an ordinary way,[91] but because the human being is double, (composed) of soul and body. These things are not able to survive one without its companion; therefore the Fathers arranged things so that, just as we care for this psychic nourishment, thus they distinguished for us times that are also convenient for us for the labor of bodily nourishment. For also our Lord when he taught the apostles the aim of spiritual prayer, because it is not able to exist without this bodily (nourishment), he said to them: *Give us today our daily bread* (Mt 6:11); he also showed that this too is by necessity required. Thus also Paul taught: *We did not bring anything into the world and it is certain that we are not even able to bring anything out of it. Because of this, food and covering are sufficient for us* (I Tim 6:7). Thus also the Fathers did, since in the two times, which they arranged for us, there are the two labors: before the summer session is the harvest, and then the session of the Apostles. Before the winter session is the labor of the figs and olives, and then the winter session. They taught us to occupy ourselves diligently in the two of them. However, we should know which labor was for the sake of which. For this spiritual one is not for the sake of the bodily, but rather the bodily for the sake of the spiritual. Thus also one of the wise men says: All human beings seek to live so that they may eat, but I myself eat so that I may live.[92]

The use of the passive form of the idiom "to establish a session" in this passage confirms the more accurate rendering of the title of the *Cause* as "The cause of the establishment of the session of the school."

As I stated above, the orientation of this genre toward festivals and liturgy has significant implication for our understanding of how the East Syrians perceived the religious valence of life in the school. It seems that the sessions (*mawtbē*) of the school year were regarded as part of the sacred calendar of the Church of the East and thus deserving of "explanation" in the same way as Easter Sunday or Pentecost. In the analogy made to Jesus' statement in the Lord's Prayer in the above passage, the school session is specifically compared to "spiritual prayer," while the off-season is compared to the physical sustenance of "daily bread." Furthermore, much of the spiritual exhortation at the end of the text suggests that study at the school was not seen as merely an intellectual exercise, but as a chance to adorn oneself in preparation for the heavenly wedding feast.[93]

### Protreptic

The way the speaker attempts to encourage the audience, both at the beginning of the text and in the peroration at the end, as well as how he continually reminds them of the deeper meaning of the life of the school, is reminiscent of the philosophical genre, or rather style, of protreptic. The most famous instance of this exhortative genre is probably Cicero's now lost dialogue *Hortensius*, a text which Augustine acknowledged to have changed his own life completely.[94]

In classical rhetoric, protreptic (*lógos protreptikós/exhortatio*) aims to win someone over to the philosophical life (in contrast to *paraínesis*, "which consists of a series of concrete rules of conduct," perhaps comparable to the canons of the School in this case).[95] It is a feature of the general proselytizing done by all the philosophical schools. Protreptic is not an actual genre, but rather a mode of discourse. It can in fact appear in various genres (i.e., letter, discourse, anthology, etc.).[96] Schenkeveld proposes that the proem of pseudo-Aristotle's *peri kosmou* as an example of this mode, since it begins with an encomium of philosophy.[97] Interestingly enough, this text is extant in a sixth-century Syriac translation.[98] Another Syriac text from the sixth century with such an encomium of philosophy at the beginning is Paul the Persian's *Introduction to Logic.* This text, which was originally composed in Persian, prefaces its description of the basics of Aristotle's *Organon* by inviting its audience to the philosophical life.[99] These texts might also be compared to the Greek diatribe, but there are problems defining what the diatribe is specifically and what its exact relation to protreptic was.[100] In any case, such minor differences are inconsequential here, since Syriac rhetorical theory was not well developed at this point (in contrast to what we find later, for example, in the early ninth century with Antony of Takrit).[101] Going beyond specific Greek literary genres and modes of discourse, by looking at such factors as the influx of a broader Greek homiletical framework into Syriac usage at this time, would be beneficial to any future analysis of the Syriac texts engaged in exhortation, such as the *Cause.*

## The Scholastic Chain of Transmission

The chain of transmission is a common literary device used in the ancient world in order to create a fictional continuity between authoritative figures in a diverse assortment of institutions. It constructs a pedigree for those institutions and validates the authority of their contemporary office holders. There are three usages of the chain of transmission that serve as parallels to its use in the *Cause*: (1) the classical one in philosophical and related medical writings; (2) the apostolic and episcopal succession; and (3) the chain as found in rabbinic sources.

The original usage of chains of transmission for philosophical and medical institutions—from which the latter two, that is the Christian and the Jewish usage, seem to derive—may have an ancient origin, and it certainly goes back at least into the Hellenistic period. Several instances of this genre serve as excellent comparanda to the *Cause.* In the library of philosophical material found in the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum there are several philosophico-historiographical works, including the *Syntaxis* or *Index of Philosophers* ("History of Philosophy").[102] One part of

this, "The History of the Academy," is similar to the *Cause* in its serial presentation of the figures in the philosophical succession, numbering the years each led the school and providing only a limited treatment of particular aspects of their individual careers.[103] The *Cause* seems to have been influenced by some of this philosophical literature, both in its technical terminology and in its strong etiological interests.[104] In the latter part of the *Cause* the literary oeuvre of each head of the School of Nisibis is described, another striking similarity to the chain of transmission device as used in classical literature. It is possible that such philosophical genealogies were translated into Syriac and served as a model for the *Cause*, since information on the history of philosophy could be included in the Neoplatonic prolegomena literature which was being translated into Syriac at this time.

Syriac Christians would have also had access to examples of succession lists via other Christian sources. The Christian practice of drawing up apostolic and episcopal succession lists derives from the classical chains of transmission. Although this notion of succession first appears in the second century, it is best attested in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Ecclesiastical History*, which like the *Cause* commonly lists each person's works. This text could have certainly influenced the *Cause*, since Eusebius was a popular author in Syriac.[105]

The development of the Christian notion of succession went in tandem with the creation of genealogies for heretics. In Chapter Two I already addressed such chains in my discussion of the sources for the School of the Persians in Edessa, since this heresiological / apostolic model underlies and, as I argued, determines how these sources present their evidence. Here let it suffice to say that the ideologically related literary forms of ecclesiastical and heresiological history informed the Syriac Christian notion of history as well as the way that that history was written.

In the rabbinic sources the chain of transmission is most famously employed in Mishnah tractate *Avot*. In fact, a comparison of *Avot* and the *Cause* (as well as other Syriac material) would most likely provide some interesting results. Both texts rely on a chain of transmission as an underlying structural principle, and the notion of "reception" is emphasized throughout the two. Since Bickermann's oft-cited article it has been known that the chain of transmission in *Avot* seems to be related to the succession lists used by various ancient institutions, particularly the philosophical schools.[106] Implicit in Bickermann's discussion is that the Hebrew word *qibbēl* as it is used in *Avot* is ultimately a calque on the Greek root √*dech-*, "to receive," which lies behind the three cognate key words found in succession lists: *diadéchomai* ("to receive in turn"), *diádochos* ("successor"), and *diadochḗ* ("succession"). *Avot* 1:1 begins: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua"; the verse then continues

with the transmission of the Torah from generation to generation. In the historical stratum that structures the various sayings of *Avot* the reception of Torah is the link between different figures. The word *qibbēl* is used through the next two chapters, but it is used without an object because the original object from *Avot* 1:1, "Torah," is apparently understood.[107]

Recent discussion has focused on how *Avot*'s succession narrative relates to early Christian episcopal and apostolic successions, including those found in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, which also rely on the Hellenistic Greek model of succession narrative.[108] To be sure, the connection between *qibbēl* and *diadéchomai* and its cognates is striking, but no one has looked closely at how these words actually relate to one another; the shared meaning of their roots (that is, "receive") has apparently served as sufficient justification for the connection made between the two. The exact process of how the use of a word in the one language led to the use of a similar word in the other has not been examined. It seems that the assumed Hellenized Greco-Roman context has sufficed to explain the simple osmosis or absorption from one language into the other. However, the word *diadéchomai* is usually used either with an office or institutional position or with the person who is succeeded as its object. In contrast, according to the traditional translation of the passages in which it is used in *Avot*, *qibbēl* is used for the reception of Torah. The three passages in the Mishnah that resemble *Avot*'s chain of transmission use *qibbēl* for the reception of tradition and not for the transfer of office.[109]

The use of the verb *qabbel*, the Syriac equivalent of *qibbēl*, and a chain of transmission similar to that of *Avot*, can be found in the *Cause*. The *Cause* uses *qabbel* in two distinct ways: the more common usage is for describing the reception of learning, which resembles the usage we find in *Avot*, while the other is for the succession of office. As we will see in Chapters Six and Seven, the *Cause* depends heavily on Greek patristic literature, which began to be translated into Syriac in the early fifth century, and even more on the Greek philosophical literature which began to be translated into Syriac c. 500. It seems that the latter usage of *qabbel* in this text, i.e., for institutional succession, derives from this translation literature. In fact, the first instance of this usage in the text probably comes ultimately from a prior translated source. In its description of the various pagan schools between the time of the prophets and the coming of Christ, the *Cause* reads:

> After he (i.e., Plato) died, Aristotle received (*qabbel*) the assembly; he turned and rejected the teaching and former tradition of his master and established his own (tradition).[110]

The word *qabbel* is used several times again to describe the succession of the different heads of the School of Nisibis. What is striking about *qibbēl/*

*qabbel* in the two texts is that the word in *Avot*, as it is traditionally understood, resembles the more common usage in the *Cause*—that is, for the reception of learning—more than it resembles the usage in the *Cause* that seems to derive from *diadéchomai* and its cognates. In other words, the meaning of *qibbēl* in *Avot* more closely resembles a usage in the *Cause* that does not actually derive from the classical chain of transmission. The relationship of technical terms in *Avot* and the *Cause* needs further examination; however, the two texts are clearly comparable as academic chains of transmission with an apologetic function for those who stand as receptors at the end of the line of transmission.

The examination of the *Cause* within the broader spectrum of chains of transmission allows us to see how the text is employing a notion of tradition common to the ancient world, and particularly to ancient intellectual life. The emphasis on the School's tradition, which we find in the *Cause*, coincides with the teaching practice of the School and the special role that reason played for students attempting to learn about the divine essence, as we will see in Chapter Seven. Other East Syrians, however, were opposed to elevating reason, preferring instead to seek the divine through more direct, less mediated, and less "rationalized" means. Just as this emphasis on the use of reason belongs to an epistemology that fits the culture of the School and the pedagogical understanding of Christianity that goes with it, so also does the literary form of the chain of transmission fit this same school culture, especially one that is hesitant about the human capacity to learn without earthly tools of learning such as reason, scripture, and tradition.

## Collective Biography

Related to the histories of philosophy in which the chain of transmission often occurs is what may be called "collective biography" or "group biography." In an extended essay on the collective biography, Patricia Cox Miller raises several issues that may help us to see the *Cause* in another interpretive light. Cox Miller argues that collective biography must be seen as a literary genre and not just as a series of lives of individuals. The juxtaposition of different lives in a collection changes the ways we read each individual life. "A collection is different from mere accumulation because 'the collection is not constructed by its elements; rather, it comes to exist by means of its principle of organization.'"[111] While earlier collections such as Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists*, and Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* present series of different characters who often fall under the same type, collective biographies from the late fourth century onwards shift in their principles of organization and tend to present individuals as static examples

of the one underlying type or principle. Cox Miller quotes from the prologue of Gregory of Tours's late sixth-century *Life of the Fathers*, where Gregory questions whether he should be speaking of the "lives" of the fathers or the "life" of the fathers.[112]

> If the fathers share a single life, it is because the subjectivity of holiness is the focus of the biographer, for whom the "diversity" of the particularities of their existences is only important insofar as it serves the ideal of sameness. Further, the center of the personality is no longer human but divine; thus comparison of individuals is not only pointless but impossible. There is no longer an interplay between type and individual or between sameness and difference; rather, any real sense of difference between individuals evaporates to the extent that each one exemplifies the subjectivity that is the heart of the collection's interest.[113]

However, with regard to the *Historia monachorum* and Eunapius's *Vitae*, Cox Miller argues that "the hagiographical impulses of these two collections are indicative of a struggle for the power to define the authentic human being."

For the *Cause* the "authentic human being" as depicted repeatedly through the course of the text is he who receives learning from his master and employs his reason to discern the signs of the Creator in both scripture and nature. The *Cause* reflects, creates, and maintains a subjectivity of Christian discipleship, or rather studentship, centered within a specific social organization. It treats the East-Syrian school "community as a diachronic succession," and thus presents us with a "group biography"[114] not unlike the many histories of monks and holy men that were written in Late Antiquity. While many monastic histories make implicit comparisons and connections between the biblical patriarchs and Christian holy men,[115] the *Cause* explicitly makes the biblical patriarchs the predecessors of contemporary members of the School of Nisibis. The collection of schools, the long series of masters from the beginning to the present day, functions to connect the present institution to those of the past, a past which has been "reasserted."[116] Similarly, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā may also be understood as a "collective biography," inasmuch as it depicts ecclesiastical history from the time when Christianity became a *religio licita* as a succession of "Orthodox" Christians suffering for the truth.[117]

Both for being a "collective biography" and for its chain of transmission, the *Cause* may be compared to many Jewish, Muslim, and Christian documents. For example, the *Letter* of Rav Sherira Gaon, written in 987, contains, or rather, according to contemporary scholarship, creates, a successive history of the Babylonian rabbinic academies and their heads.[118] One near-contemporary text with which we might compare the *Cause*, and which also serves as a source for the philosophical culture of the West

that would have such a great influence on the School of Nisibis, is the so-called *Philosophical History* of Damascius (c. 480 to c. 550), the Neoplatonist philosopher who served as the last of the succession of heads of the Academy of Athens.[119] On the closure of the Academy in 529 by the emperor Justinian, Damascius, along with several others, went to the court of Khosro I, but returned soon after. According to the fictitious tradition of the Academy, Damascius was a link in the "golden chain" of philosophers going back to Plato himself.[120] The *Philosophical History*, the original of which has been lost and which can only be reconstructed from numerous fragments, is, at least in part, a "group biography" of a number of late pagan Neoplatonist philosophers.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the different genres, or modes, in which the author of the *Cause* composed. In the end I hope to have established that the *Cause* may be understood in light of several genres and literary forms commonly employed, especially within institutions of learning, in antiquity. Certain literary genres are appropriate to certain settings. The *Cause* as a literary text purportedly written to be performed before the students at the School of Nisibis would have introduced the School's new members to the historical and epistemological foundation for the life upon which they were about to embark. We may set this literary text next to the pedagogical understanding of Christianity, which it promotes and which served as a linchpin between the ideology and social practice of the East-Syrian school. Furthermore, the genre of the *Cause* links life at the School more closely to the religious life. The generic ties between the *Cause* and the other examples of cause literature tell us that the two academic sessions of the school year were set within a sacred calendar, just as were any other Christian holidays the East Syrians observed. Just as the East Syrians wrote causes of the holidays, such as Easter or Christmas, so also they wrote causes of the School semesters. These events, both Christian holidays and the School session, were instituted on the sacred calendar and piqued the etiological interest of intellectuals in the East-Syrian schools.

Whatever literary form(s) the author may have been employing, the *Cause*, as well as the daily life of the School of Nisibis as we can reconstruct it, exhibits a particular understanding of Christianity, one that conflates a pious Christian life—even Christianity itself—with learning and intellectual activity. This then ties the *Cause* to the broader pedagogical framework in which Syriac Christians often imagined Christianity, as discussed in Chapter One. Furthermore, it firmly places the *Cause* in the trajectory of Theodore of Mopsuestia's thought as it developed in the Church of the East through the sixth century.

*Chapter 6*

# The Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the School of Nisibis

For ninety years and a bit more Theodore lived,
Neither did he cease nor was he silent from the fight with the errant ones.
The just man was dressed all his life with a sword of the spirit,
And he fought with troops of heretics.
By the blade of his word he laid waste to the sons of error,
And he exposed the sorts of tricks of their teachings.[1]

These bland lines of verse were composed by the lesser of the two distinguished Syriac poets of the late fifth and early sixth century, Narsai, the first head of the School of Nisibis. They attest to the process of elevating Theodore of Mopsuestia to the central position of theological and exegetical authority in the Church of the East, a process which culminated with the declaration at the synod held by the Catholicos Gregory I in 605 that "each of us should receive and accept all the commentaries and writings of the blessed Theodore the Interpreter."[2] In the century and a half after his death in 428 Theodore's fame spread, and not only in the Syriac-speaking church. At the same time that he was being condemned at Constantinople in 553, his works were being studied in Greek, Latin, and Syriac in a number of intellectual centers.[3] The popularity he enjoyed was due in part to the esteem in which he was held at the School of Nisibis. For a version of his thought flowed out from the School and affected Greek-speaking Christians in Alexandria such as Cosmas Indicopleustes and Latin-speaking Christians such as Junillus Africanus.

Without ever naming Theodore as the source of his thought, Cosmas depends on him for the fundamental structure of the universe he lays out in the *Christian Topography*, a hybrid text consisting of a combination of geography, cosmology, and travel writing.[4] Cosmas became acquainted with Theodore's thought from his meeting in Alexandria with Mār Abā, an important figure in the East-Syrian school movement and the future Catholicos of the Church of the East (d. 552). As we saw in Chapter One, Mār Abā traveled to the West, including Alexandria, after studying at the School of Nisibis and, according to Cosmas, Abā taught him the theology

prevalent in the East at that time.[5] Similarly, Junillus Africanus, the *Quaestor Sacri Palatii* in the court of Justinian in the 540s, borrowed a Theodoran perspective from Paul the Persian, a certain teacher from Nisibis who visited Constantinople.[6]

An examination of the place of Theodore's thought at the School of Nisibis offers a view not only into the intellectual life of the School but also into the background to the Theodorism, which went out from the School and across the Mediterranean. The aim of this chapter is to examine the place of Theodore's thought at the School of Nisibis by exploring Barḥadbĕšabbā's debt to Theodore and fitting this literary dependence into the broader discussion of how Theodore's thought was received in the sixth century. My purposes are several. First, while Barḥadbĕšabbā's dependence on Theodore has been acknowledged by previous scholars, it has not been formally analyzed. As Macina, Wallace-Hadrill, and Reinink have suggested, the *Cause* is dependent on Theodore's idea of divine *paideia,* in which divine providence directs the present age until the future age of immortality and endows us with rational minds to make decisions, laws to guide us, and bodily existence to develop and test our virtues.[7] Scholars have certainly been correct in emphasizing that the theological roots of the *Cause* lie in Theodore's writings. Often referred to by the East Syrians as "the Interpreter," Theodore was considered by them and by later scholars as the exegetical and theological authority of the East-Syrian tradition, and his works have been seen as providing a matrix upon which much of East-Syrian thought is constructed.

However, a second reason for clearly delineating what the *Cause* draws from Theodore is that it will make it easier to identify the non-Theodoran material in the text, and thus to distinguish the different strands of thought that came together in the School of Nisibis in the late sixth century. Thirdly, Theodore was a contested figure in the sixth century and central to the development of an East-Syrian identity; it will be of interest to see how he, like the other two figures in the "Nestorian" triumvirate, Diodore of Tarsus and Nestorius, was elevated to an authoritative, even mythic status. Finally, Theodore's theological views may be seen as an intellectualized form of the pedagogical model analyzed in Chapter One. The *Cause* relies on his thought not just for a set of metaphors but for a consistent theological system based upon his notion of divine *paideia.*

The translation of Theodore's works was part of the larger reception of the Greek patristic corpus into Syriac. Greek patristic texts began to be translated into Syriac by the end of the fourth century, and this effort increased through the fifth century. This translation project would contribute to the loss of certain indigenous ideas and practices.[8] However,

at the same time, the early translations were loose and showed the theological interests of Syriac-speaking Christianity. For example, in Chapter One, I mentioned one of the earliest and perhaps most influential works to be translated into Syriac, Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, which served as a model for much of the succeeding ecclesiastical historiography via both its influence on other Greek works and its direct influence in translation. The Syriac version is an example of a loose translation that often expresses indigenous ideas.[9]

Most of the translating of Greek texts, especially after the theological schism of the fifth century, was done by Miaphysites, that is, those who would develop into the West-Syrian church. Each of the three Cappadocian fathers is well attested in Syriac, with Gregory of Nazianzus being the one with the most works translated. All forty-five of his homilies, part of his *Carmina* and letters, and a large pseudepigraphic collection are extant in Syriac.[10] These texts began to be translated from the fifth century onwards. Often earlier versions of this literature were revised with the incorporation of improved techniques of *verbum e verbo* translation.[11] For example, in 624 the West-Syrian Paul of Edessa produced a completely new version of Gregory's homilies in line with contemporary translation practice. He worked in the monasteries of Mār Zakkai at Kallinikos and of Qennešrīn (Chalcis), which were the main West-Syrian centers of Greek translation.[12] Not coincidentally, the biblical translators Thomas of Ḥarqel and Paul of Tella were both from these same institutions.[13]

The translated portions of Basil of Caesarea's literary corpus provide an exemplary case of how Greek patristic authors could be taken up in the Syriac milieu.[14] First, some of his works were translated rather early into loose renderings that often stray widely from the original Greek text.[15] The translations were then revised or redone in later centuries to represent the Greek better. His works were well received; as Taylor notes, in the mere number of citations in Wright's catalogue of Syriac manuscripts at the British Library, only Ephrem, Jacob of Sarug, John Chrysostom, and Severus of Antioch outnumber Basil.[16] Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* would have a strong influence on Syriac hexaemeral literature, as can be seen, for example, in Jacob of Edessa's similar work.[17] Characteristic of Basil's patristic authority in the East is the development of the biographical tradition about him in Syriac. He appears in the *Life of Ephrem* when Ephrem honors him with a visit and the two, one a Greek speaker, the other Syriac, are miraculously able to converse with one another.[18] Taylor argues that the subordination of Ephrem to Basil in the *vita* tradition is part of sixth and seventh-century West-Syrian apologetics for why the Greek fathers should be studied.[19] Herein we can see the symbolic importance that these figures had, aside from the significance of the actual content of their writings.

The translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's works during the Christological disputes of the fifth century was part of a massive patristic translation project that lasted some two hundred years. Much of this translation work was done in Edessa and is thus an important part of the fifth-century Edessene intellectual background to the School of Nisibis and to many of the ideas we find in the *Cause.*[20] Rabbula of Edessa (d. 435/6) was known for translating Cyril of Alexandria, while the translations of Theodore are attributed to Ibas (d. 457), Rabbula's theological enemy. Just as the Arian controversy in the Syriac milieu would have served as an impetus for the translation of the fourth-century fathers, so also the Christological controversy of the fifth century led to an "arms race" of patristic argumentation. Theodore's work seems to have had an influence even beyond openly "Nestorian" circles, since Jacob of Sarug's *Homilies on Creation* demonstrate an obvious dependence on Theodore's exegesis of Genesis 1, despite Jacob's denials of such allegations.[21]

It is commonly accepted that Theodore became the theological and exegetical authority par excellence for the East Syrians. Through the fifth and into the sixth century he was a towering authority for many Christians, both in the Syriac milieu and well beyond it. As I noted above, his influence could be felt in Alexandria in the writings of Cosmas Indicopleustes, but we can also trace his influence to the Latin West, where some of his works lost in the original were transmitted. (This connection between Syriac- and Latin-speaking Christians is no surprise, considering the Christological affinities they shared in the post-Chalcedonian disputes.) By the late sixth century, the East Syrians were citing Theodore as *the* authority on theological matters in their church synods. However, the East-Syrian reliance on Theodore was not as complete as scholars, often following the statements of the East Syrians themselves, have suggested.[22] While the East Syrians continued to pay lip service to Theodore's authority—perhaps because his name had become an emblem of their resistance to Western Christological formulations—they relied on other sources and at times even engaged in exegetical activity of which Theodore would have disapproved, such as allegorical exegesis. A process of mythologizing key Greek patristic thinkers can be seen in the sources, a mythologizing that should be read critically. Thus we should remain aware of how the figure of Theodore (and of other fathers) also had a symbolic value that transcended the actual content of his writings. For example, Narsai's *Homily on the Learned Fathers* employs epic battle metaphors to describe Diodore of Tarsus, Nestorius, and Theodore of Mopsuestia as valiant defenders of orthodoxy.[23] However, it is clear that Narsai knew very little about Nestorius and that the whole text is more exhortation and high-flown metaphor than descriptive theological content.[24] This attribution of a mythic status to Theodore as the theological,

and especially the exegetical, master appears in the *Cause* in its florid description of Theodore's project.[25]

Furthermore, recent scholarship has revealed the complex relationship between early Antiochene and Syriac exegesis. Whereas the earlier model held that Theodore's ideas were introduced into the Syriac milieu when his books were brought to Edessa and translated into Syriac, we now know that previous exegetical contact existed between Edessa and Antioch. For example, Eusebius of Emesa (d. c. 359), whose work has only recently been studied, came from Edessa but is considered part of the Antiochene school of exegesis.[26] This dual identity in a writer predating Theodore suggests closer ties between Antiochene and Edessene exegesis than were previously assumed, ties prior to the influx of Theodore's works into Edessa. Thus the East-Syrian attraction to the writings of Theodore may be due to East-Syrian authors' sharing a similar intellectual background with him.[27] Furthermore, we should bear in mind that his reception into Syriac was mediated through a process of translation that modified his works significantly.[28]

Despite these qualifications, Theodore's influence on the Church of the East, including its Christology, exegesis, and sacramental theology, was immense. His importance in exegesis alone can not be overstated. ʿAbdīšōʿ's *Catalogue* lists his many works known in Syriac.[29] His commentary on the Gospel of John comes down to us in full only in the Syriac version (and is a key text for the reconstruction of his Christology).[30] His commentary on the Psalms, of which only fragments remain, had an ongoing influence in the Church of the East.[31] The broad reception of his works into Syriac by the sixth century explains how a text like the *Cause* could be as thoroughly Theodoran as it is.

However, since Theodore was not a systematic theologian, his ideas are often reconstructed from snippets of his exegetical, homiletical, and polemical works. This problem is compounded by the fact that, for various reasons, but mostly due to the condemnation of his works at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553, Theodore's works are largely preserved either in fragments or in Latin and Syriac translations. Therefore, the reconstruction of his thought is incomplete and there continues to be a lack of consensus on certain aspects of it (e.g., the question of whether the human being was originally created mortal). The most detailed work has been done on his *Catechetical Homilies*, which are extant only in Syriac.[32]

These are the dominant themes of Theodore's thought as they pertain to the basic course of history and the human being's place within the world: there are two worlds, the present and the future one. We have been set in this world, bounded by mortality, so that we may be trained in the virtues. God has endowed us with free will so that we can choose either good or bad. The training of the virtues comes about through the

use of our reasoning faculty, which negotiates the desires and needs associated with mortality on the one hand and the commandments of the law on the other.[33]

As Norris emphasizes, Theodore has a particular notion of rationality. While he follows the general Platonic outlook of his day in attributing reason to the soul and thus connecting it to the invisible and immortal, he goes against the mainstream of Greek thought in his characterization of reason and its function. Theodore's understanding of reason is not contemplative; rather, he associates it only with moral and ethical choices and the actions following from them. He sees reason as a capacity for choosing the good, as opposed to the almost thoughtless performance of the good that the Platonist would expect.[34] Following his close reading of Paul (cf. Rom 7:19, 21–23), Theodore disagrees with Plato, who thought that one could not knowingly do evil. In contrast, for Theodore this world is one of instruction. It is a proving ground for human reason. Furthermore,

> Theodore sees man's predicament primarily in historical terms, extended along a temporal axis, rather than in ontological terms in a philosophical manner, even though Platonic implications remain embedded in his thought.[35]

This notion of the world and emphasis on the "temporal axis" fits with Antiochene exegetical theory and practice.

Much has been written on Antiochene exegesis and its relationship to Alexandrian exegesis. The usual practice has been to juxtapose the two, the former customarily characterized as "historical," the latter as "allegorical." However, these labels do not do justice to either. The relationship between the two seems to be more that of two points on a spectrum than of opposite extremes or distinct poles. Instead of seeing the difference between the two "schools" of exegesis as a dispute between literalists and allegorists, it has been suggested that the Antiochene school reflects the ancient grammatical and rhetorical schools,[36] while the allegory associated with Alexandrian Christianity derives from philosophy, particularly the philosophical allegorical reading of Greek literature.[37] However, there seems to be more to Antiochene exegesis than merely a Greek school background, since, as stated above, Antiochene exegesis had a longstanding kinship with exegesis from the Syriac milieu, reflecting perhaps an attitude towards the biblical text more in line with that of the Rabbis.[38] Whatever its exact origins, the Antiochene school of exegesis to which Theodore belonged must not be understood as literalist or "historical" in our modern sense of the term, as if the "historical" explanation derives from an "historical" interest. In contrast to the Alexandrians, who more fully mapped the New Testament over the Old, the Antiochenes attributed greater independence and *meaningful* integrity to the biblical text and the narrative within it.[39]

Theodore's notion of divine *paideia* belongs to this "historical" approach to scripture (and thus demonstrates the close connection between his biblical historiography and his exegetical method).[40] The idea that God is a pedagogue teaching each generation is appropriate to Antiochene exegesis, which refused to flatten out the diversity of scripture into a single Christological theme in the manner of Alexandrian exegesis. It should be noted that many of the pedagogical terms, which we find in the *Cause* and in other East-Syrian literature and which are based upon the same Syriac root (*ʾ-l-p*; e.g., *yullphānā, mallphānūtā*), appear throughout the Syriac translation of Theodore's *Catechetical Homilies*.[41] The importance of teaching as well as the tendency to treat biblical texts as having meanings beyond the merely Christological fits with the view of progressive revelation we find in the *Catechetical Homilies*.[42]

East-Syrian literature, especially that of the school movement, such as the *Cause*, depends heavily on these notions, as well as on many other aspects of Theodore's thought. However, this dependence always entails a certain development of Theodore's ideas and not a static recitation of them. For example, the theme of divine *paideia* becomes even more important in East-Syrian authors such as Narsai, who transform it into a more concrete ideology at the same time as they popularize Theodore's ideas.[43] This popularized version of Theodore's thought can be found throughout the cause literature. Furthermore, the prologue of the canons of the School of Nisibis from 602, which was, like the *Cause*, written when the School of Nisibis was led by Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene, shares many ideas as well as technical terms with the *Cause*, maintaining a similar Theodoran psychology and anthropology.[44]

The several instances of the cause genre composed by Cyrus of Edessa in the mid-sixth century exhibit this notion of divine *paideia*, generally in their idea of creation[45] but specifically in the pedagogical language employed.

> Accordingly, [because] that provider of our salvation, God our Lord, considered our lack of training and, at the same time too, the harm that would be procured us from those reason[s] that the discourse has indicated, like a compassionate father who considers the imperfection of his children and does not put them in charge over his possessions before the time that is proper, he first arranged for us that we should live [as] in a sort of training-place in the school of this world (*b-bēt durrāšā medem b-eskōlaw(hy) d-ʿālmā hānā*), full of sufferings and wearisome with adversities, so that in it, at least, we might be taught as [in] a sort of gymnasium (*netyallaph a(y)k da-d-bēt agōnā*), and, from the contrarieties with which it abounds, we might distinguish good from evil; and (only) then, after we had been disciplined as much as was proper and the choice of the good had been known to us, did he make ready to give us [that] world to come, which is exempt from all contradiction and in which there reigns perpetual life without end.[46]

These same notions of divine *paideia* that we find scattered throughout

East-Syrian texts relatively contemporary to the *Cause* appear in the most extreme form in the *Cause* itself.

In fact, all the ideas from Theodore's thought highlighted above are apparent in the *Cause*. For example, it states that the world is made up of two *tuqqānē* (Greek *katastáseis*). The first one is the realm of the body (*gšīmūtā*), which "the Creator established (*atqnāh*)" "as a training exercise and a sign of his (i.e., the human being's) freedom (*a(y)k da-l-nuppāqēh wa-l-ātā d-ḥērūtēh*)."[47]

With his wisdom he (i.e., God) has provided for our construction (*parnas l-tuqqānan*) that it be double: one of mortality which suits those in need and the pupils, and the other belonging to the perfect, one which suits the delight of the righteous.[48]

Further on, the *Cause* maintains a Theodoran understanding of God's gracious construction of the present world.

For it (i.e., the divine grace) is the cause of the construction (*'eltā d-tuqqānēh*) of the world and of our first creation. For no one asked God to create the creatures, except for his grace and mercy.[49]

The *Cause* also follows Theodore's positive notion of law:

When we were found to be continually doing wrong and provoking (him), he in his patience lifted us and bore us with life-giving laws that from generation to generation[50] have been established as for our benefit, especially that which was given to the Israelite people through the blessed Moses, so that they might acquire love for God and neighbor and distance themselves from the worship of idols, and confess him who alone is the true God, existing for ever.[51]

For the *Cause*, as for Theodore, the coming of Christ is a final instance of God's grace, in contrast to an Alexandrian perspective, which would hold that it is by this event that all other events are to be understood.

After all these things that great, glorious, and ineffable thing was also given to us: that is, the advent of Christ, through whom all the wealth of his (i.e., God's) kindness and immeasurable mercy were poured upon us.[52]

Finally, Theodore's focus on employing reason to discern good from evil, and on our possessing free will to follow the good once it has been found, is attested in the *Cause*'s long discussion of the psychology of the human being.[53] In fact, despite its heavy reliance on Greek philosophical concepts and terms (as will be demonstrated in the following chapter), the foundation for much of the *Cause*'s anthropology and the human being's place within creation can be found in Theodore's works.

The *Cause*'s dependence on Theodore's thought is part of a broader Theodorism emanating from the School of Nisibis in the sixth century.

For example, the *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes and Narsai's *Homilies on Creation* share a number of parallels with the *Cause*. As stated above, Cosmas learned from Mār Abā and maintains a Theodoran outlook. More significantly, Narsai was the first head of the School of Nisibis, and it is likely that the author of the *Cause* had access to his collection of homilies at the School. For example, the *Cause*'s description of the jealousy of Satan and the account of the Fall fit with what we find in both Cosmas and Narsai.

> Because the mind has done what is opposed to the first teaching that it received, and it has put out its eye of discernment from the understanding of rationality and it has obeyed the words of its deceiver, that is, his older brother who first sinned and fell from his rank, he who is a liar and the father of falsehood, this one, who eagerly works in the sons of disobedience; on account of this a verdict (Gr. *apóphasis*) goes out against him: *You are dust and you will turn back to dust, and you will eat the grass of the field* (Gen 3:18, 19), however instruction and learning he (i.e., God) did not withhold from him (i.e., the mind); rather in many changes he confers upon him learning concerning himself, lest when he neglects it he perish completely and become a vessel of harm.[54]

Narsai and Cosmas also focus on Gen 3:17–19, Cosmas, like the *Cause*, referring to it as a "verdict" or "sentence."[55] Furthermore, the *Cause* seems to depend directly on Narsai in presenting Satan's hypothetical speech when he is angered at God's creation and elevation of man.[56]

One extremely common Antiochene motif that is significant in Theodore's works and also shows up in the *Cause* is the focus on the human being as the "image" of God, which derives originally from exegesis of Gen. 1:26.[57] The following passage from the *Cause* showcases Theodore's influence, despite the fact that the very tenor of the passage is strikingly less sober than what we find in his works.

> But lest this lower portion be saddened and envy the honor of its higher mate, he honored it with the name "his image and likeness" (cf. Gen 1:26), and he placed upon it the name of his divinity (or: his divine name): *I have said, "You are Gods and children of the Exalted all of you"* (Ps 82:6). And he (i.e., God) gave it (i.e., the lower portion) the power to ascend to heaven and the upper vaults; and just as in a royal palace (Gr. *palátion*) and the upper chambers (Gr. *triklinos*) to go about in all the streets and ways (Gr. *plateîa*) above the upper heavens. And sometimes he (i.e. the lower portion) descends to take pleasure in that whole wide gulf between the firmament and heaven, while he is with himself as if in a royal palace (Pers. *āpadnā*). And when he wants, he sends himself forth from there to this bodily place beneath the firmament and he flies in that fiery place and he is not scorched, and he goes over the stars as if over rocks in the midst of a river, and he does not sink, and he converses with his spiritual brothers and all the orders of angels with true love. And because from time to time he casts the glance of his mind (*re'yāneh*) at the course of the sun and at the changes of the moon and at the arrangement of the stars—something which is effected by the working of his brothers—lest he be envious of them and grow sick from his bodily service,

his Lord gives even to him from time to time authority over them (i.e., the luminaries) that by his command they might be led, as we see Joshua bar Nun who confined one over Gibeon and that other one he fastened over the Valley of Aijalon (Jos 10:12); and Isaiah commanded it (i.e., a luminary) and it turned back ten steps and he taught his mates that the luminaries are creatures, but not creators (2 Kg 20:11).[58]

Beyond the focus on the human being as the "image" of God, an emphasis which derives at least in part from Theodore's works, this passage contains several motifs that can be identified as part of the common stock of Theodoran exegesis that developed in the Church of the East, particularly in the School of Nisibis.

A number of parallels exist between this passage and the works of Cosmas and Narsai. Both emphasize the human being as image of God. They also, like the *Cause*, specifically attribute the motion of the stars to the angels, an idea that derives from Theodore.[59] Cosmas employs the same biblical texts as the *Cause*, Joshua 10:12 and 2 Kings 20:11, to make this argument.[60] Finally, the notion that heaven and earth are two distinct realms divided by the firmament, a thick shell composed of the upper waters brought together by God at creation, belongs to this later Theodoran thought (although it may ultimately derive from an ancient Near Eastern source). Cosmas takes Theodore's notion of the two *katastáseis*, which are for Theodore essentially temporal and ontological categories, and maps them on to the spatial division between heaven and earth.[61] Like the *Cause*, Cosmas describes the heavens as "vaulted" and the firmament as the abode of the angels, difficult to pass through.[62]

The *Cause* provides us with an example of Theodore's thought as it had developed over the sixth century at the School of Nisibis. Its similarities to the earlier works of Narsai allows us to grasp how his thought was mediated through the School, while the numerous parallels to the *Christian Topography* further confirm the dependence of Cosmas Indicopleustes on the School's version of Theodore. However, the notion of heavenly ascent in this passage from the *Cause* points to the wall that we inevitably hit in employing Theodore of Mopseuestia and his thought as it had developed by the sixth century as a heuristic device for this text. For example, this passage's use of Ps 82:6 to suggest the human capacity for transcendence points to another major influence on East-Syrian thought in the sixth century, that is, the work of Evagrius of Pontus.

Another passage from the *Cause* demonstrates the depth of its dependence on Theodore of Mopsuestia but also points to the limits of his influence. This passage comes from the *Cause*'s description of the creation of the world. It understands the six days of creation as the first school in the long series of schools the text will later describe.

Because the spiritual powers are first in creation and more excellent in substance, God brought forth his teaching to them, lest they should fall in error and

falsely suppose great things about themselves. He wrote a scroll of imperceptible light with his finger of creative power, and with his command upon it[63] he had them read with an audible voice: *Let there be light, and there was light* (Gen 1:3) and because there was an understanding mind in them, at that very moment they understood that everything that comes into being came into being from another and everyone who is in authority is commanded by someone who is in authority, and from this they knew exactly that the one who brought this excellent nature into being also created them. Therefore all of them in a group with an audible voice repaid their creator with thanks, as it is said in Job, *When I was creating the stars of dawn, all my angels shouted with a loud voice and praised me* (Jb 38:7).[64]

Theodore of Mopsuestia's influence can be seen specifically in the above passage's exegesis of Genesis 1 and more generally in the way the *Cause* depicts all of human history as a sequence of schools. A description of Theodore's exegesis of Genesis 1 and further discussion of his idea of divine *paideia* will illustrate both these points of influence.

Insofar as it can be reconstructed, Theodore's commentary on Genesis clearly lies behind the *Cause*'s understanding of Genesis 1.[65] It divides the creation narrative, and thus the process of creation, into two parts. In the first, the heavens, the earth, and various other entities whose creation is not mentioned by scripture (such as fire, darkness, and the angels) came into being by God's will alone. Genesis 1:1—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—is Moses' abridged description of this earlier creation. The second comes about through God's verbal fiats: "Let there be light!," "Let there be a firmament!," etc. Of course, God did not need his word to bring about this second creation, but he used it in order to teach the angels that it is he who is the Creator of everything and that he wields authority over all. During the first creation, "there was no one for whom it was fitting to learn anything from his word";[66] hence God's silence.

Theodore's understanding of the transcendence and omnipotence of God directs his exegesis of Genesis 1. While some early Christians would use God's ability to create with his word alone as evidence of his power, in Theodore's view it seems to limit the divine omnipotence, which can cause things to be by will alone. Thus, Theodore requires another reason for the creation by fiat, and he finds it in the unknowability of God. The angels recognize the Creator through the effect his creative word exerts on the world. Furthermore, by comparing the objects of this world through a process of analogy, the angels use their reason to learn about God.[67] By using his word (Gr. *lógos*, Syr. *meltā*), God allows himself to be recognized by the angels who are rational (Gr. *logikós*, Syr. *mlīlā*).[68]

In the above quotation from the *Cause*, the creation of the angels prior to the six days of creation described in Genesis, God's desire to teach the angels about himself, the angels' rational deduction of God's authority, and even the use of Job 38:7 derive from Theodore's commentary on

Genesis. Further Theodoran influence can be seen more broadly in the pedagogical schematization of history that follows. However, the rich and detailed imagery of pedagogy that we find in the *Cause* has no parallel in Theodore's works. To be sure, the Greek verb *paideúein* can be found behind the extant Syriac of his commentary on Genesis, but the imagery goes no further than this. Moreover, just as the *Cause* takes Theodore's exegesis of Genesis to another level, so its presentation of human history as a succession of schools puts Theodore's idea of divine *paideia* into far more concrete terms. Theodore may have understood God to be instructing the angels at creation and humans throughout history, but he does not speak of classrooms and schools. His works fail to explain the origin of the rich imagery of the *Cause.*

The works of Narsai clearly demonstrate the ways in which the conceptual institutionalization of heaven evolved along with a concrete institutionalization on earth. Narsai was of the first generation of students in Edessa to study the works of Theodore in Syriac translation. He was head of the School of the Persians in Edessa until the exodus to Nisibis, where he oversaw the formalization of its official rules. Narsai's metrical homilies on creation reflect this process of institutionalization:

> And he taught them a new book which they did not know,
> As if (they were) children he wrote a sound (*ba(r)t qālā*) instead of letters,
> And he had them pronounce in the writings, "Let there be light."
> In the form of a verse he directed the sound (*qālā*) before their eyes,
> And they began to shout, "Blessed is the creator who created the light."[69]

> As if with a finger he was showing them the power of his essence,
> "See, Angels, that I am the power over every power,"
> As if with a pen he was writing for them a book in the mind,
> And he was making them read syllable by syllable (or: meditate upon) the writings of the creator of all.
> In the likeness of a Master (*rabbā*) his gesture was standing at the head of their rows,
> And he was repeating (*tānē*) to them the power of the meaning of his hidden things.[70]

This passage is thoroughly Theodoran. Yet, at the same time, its use of concrete scholastic metaphors represents a clear departure from Theodore's milder philosophical analogies. In fact, we witness in this excerpt precisely the same type of elaboration that we have seen Theodore's ideas receive at the hand of the author of the *Cause.*

However, while Narsai is the first to describe creation as a school lesson with books, pens, and other accoutrements, his language is often qualified by simile markers (i.e., it is *like* a classroom). Narsai has enriched the metaphorical meaning of Theodore's *paideúein,* but it nonetheless

remains metaphor. Like Narsai's similes, the *Cause* makes an analogy between heaven and earth; however, it goes a step beyond metaphor when it suggests that God teaches with a "scroll of imperceptible light."[71] This is not a simile, but rather the projection of a mundane practice into heaven. Similarly, when the *Cause* reports that God "had them read (*aqrī*) aloud," it is clear that He is being imagined in the role of the "reader" (*maqryānā*), one of the offices in the School of Nisibis.[72] Such a correlation between earthly and heavenly institutions is of course not uncommon: for example, the real world of the monastery caused some Christians to reimagine the heavenly city in monastic terms.[73] Transformations above often conform to developments below.

I would tentatively suggest that the changeover from the use of metaphor to constructing "spiritual" equivalents of earthly entities would have been facilitated by the influx of Neoplatonic literature into the School of Nisibis in the sixth century, the topic of the following chapter, as well as the interest in metaphors of reading and writing in the Evagrian corpus. Numerous scholars, as well as the East Syrians themselves, have emphasized that the Church of the East depended heavily on the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia. However, we must not lose sight of the East Syrians' agency and creativity in this process of reception. It was inevitable that in the transference from the Greek context of his original compositions to the Syriac culture of Nisibis and further east Theodore's thought would evolve in new and creative directions. This evolution occurred within specific institutions, and its results were correlative to the social practices of the East-Syrian school movement.

*Chapter 7*

# Spelling God's Name with the Letters of Creation: The Use of Neoplatonic Aristotle in the *Cause*

For Plato first made an assembly in Athens. More than a thousand men were gathered before him, so they say. Even Aristotle was there before him. One day, while he was expounding (*mphaššeq (h)wā*), after he looked and did not see Aristotle, he spoke thus: "The friend of wisdom is not here. Where is the seeker of the beautiful? I have a thousand and not one, but one is more than a thousand." (*Cause* 363.7–11)

This passage comes from the *Cause of the Foundation of the Schools* description of the pagan schools that existed before the coming of Christ. In this portion of the text the author seems to be relying on a prior doxographical collection,[1] but this particular anecdote derives from the Greek biographical tradition of Aristotle, and its incorporation into the *Cause* is emblematic of the larger reception and assimilation of Greek philosophical material into much of Syriac literature from this period onward.[2] Next to the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia, as it had been developing through the sixth century, this reception of Greek philosophical learning—particularly the Neoplatonic version of Aristotelian logic—was the other major influence on the *Cause*. From the late fifth and early sixth centuries onward, Greek philosophical texts were being translated into Syriac, and Syriac authors began to integrate many of the notions and terms they found in these texts into their own literature, often in interesting ways.[3] This led to strikingly hybrid literary forms, such as some portions of the *Cause* that I would like to analyze in this chapter.

The *Cause* shows numerous minor instances of dependence on earlier sources deriving from a later Neoplatonic intellectual milieu. However, despite the material deriving from, for example, Aristotelian psychology and natural science, it seems that the only philosophical texts upon which the *Cause* depends are Aristotle's logical works, particularly the *Organon*, and the Neoplatonic commentary tradition on them.[4] After a broad historical sketch of the various routes by which philosophical material may have reached Nisibis, I will return to the section of the

*Cause* where the classroom established by God at the beginning of creation is described. This portion of the text, part of which I addressed in the preceding chapter (*Cause* 348.4–13), showcases a hybrid use of philosophical material and employs metaphors and terminology that help set up a framework for examining the natural theology that is to be found in the section of the *Cause* (333.8–345.6), which evidences a particularly rich dependence on the Neoplatonic Aristotelian material.[5] This portion of the text may be understood as an expansion on the metaphors of reading and writing in *Cause* 348.4–349.13. Finally, I will speculate about how this philosophical material was mapped onto a traditional Syriac, or as I will suggest, Ephremic, framework when it was received by the East Syrians.

## The Influx of Neoplatonic Aristotelian Material into Nisibis

I would like to sketch out briefly some of the possibilities for how philosophical material may have reached Nisibis, a city in upper Mesopotamia across the Roman border and within the Sasanian Empire. In the past, it was believed that the works of Aristotle and Porphyry's *Isagoge* were translated and studied in Edessa in the fifth century, particularly at the so-called "School of Edessa." This is a common assumption in the secondary literature, even in the more recently published material.[6] According to this theory, philosophical material would have been imported into Nisibis by the community of the School of the Persians when it was closed in 489. This places the study of philosophy at the very origins of the School of Nisibis. However, the evidence for philosophical studies in Syriac in fifth-century Edessa is thin and, in fact, as Brock pointed out some time ago, the basis of this theory comes ultimately from a misreading of the *Catalogue* of ʿAbdīšōʿ that led to dating Probus, the early Syriac translator of and commentator on Aristotelian logical works, to the fifth century and placing him in Edessa.[7]

This obsolete view is further based upon the false assumption that the works of Aristotle and Porphyry were studied in their own right, and not necessarily as part of the Neoplatonic curriculum. Although there is evidence that, for example, Porphyry was school reading in Antioch,[8] it is more likely that these texts were taken up within a later Neoplatonic curriculum. There exists no textual evidence to support the claim that the Antiochene fathers relied particularly on Aristotle.[9] Further evidence militating against the theory that philosophy came to Edessa via the Antiochene tradition is provided by the emphasis scholars have come to put on the rhetorical foundation of Antiochene exegesis, in contrast to the philosophically oriented "School of Alexandria."[10]

The Aristotelian terms and concepts in the *Cause* do not derive simply from a reading of Aristotle; rather, Aristotle's thought was mediated

by the later Neoplatonic reception of this material. This notion of a Neoplatonic version of Aristotle is set forth in Richard Sorabji's edited collection, *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence* (1990), which brings together past and more recent scholarship on the later Neoplatonic commentary tradition. By "later Neoplatonic" I mean specifically those texts and authors, both pagan and Christian, from the time of Ammonius, the later Neoplatonic commentator (435/45–517/26), onward. The first well known translator of these texts from Greek into Syriac was Sergius of Rēšʿaynā (d. c. 536), who followed the Alexandrian commentators in his work.[11] If the School of the Persians in Edessa was closed in 489, it is indeed unlikely that any of this later Neoplatonic literature found its way to Edessa prior to the closure of the School. Thus, it seems this material did not travel with the members of the School on their exodus to Nisibis but rather reached the School of Nisibis at some later point after its foundation. There are several possibilities for how this may have occurred.

Brock has suggested that this material came from direct contacts between Alexandria and Nisibis.[12] The *Life of Mār Abā* depicts Abā (d. 552) as studying at the School of Nisibis, then travelling through Edessa where he meets his disciple, Thomas, and later heading to Alexandria to dispute with a certain Sergius, perhaps Sergius of Rēšʿaynā himself.[13] After moving on to Greece and then returning to Nisibis, Abā eventually became Catholicos of the Church of the East. Cosmas Indicopleustes, who relies heavily on a sixth-century version of the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia, states that he learned what he knew from this same Abā.[14] If we consider that in his *De Opificio Mundi* John Philoponus (c. 490-c.570) argues against the cosmogonic and cosmological views of Theodore at approximately the same time that Cosmas is writing, it becomes apparent that Nisibene influence may lie behind one of the great debates of late antique Alexandria.[15] Furthermore, the spread of the School of Nisibis's fame and ideas can also be seen in Junillus's *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis*,[16] where he cites as his source a certain Paul the Persian from Nisibis.[17] Cassiodorus, a writer who had a strong influence on the Latin Middle Ages, knew Junillus's text and mentions Paul the Persian at the beginning of his *Institutiones*.[18]

From the evidence above, it is clear that the East Syrians' influence could be felt in the West. This was also a time when Western influence on the East was running along similar paths. For example, in her *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, Eva Riad demonstrates how the structure of the Neoplatonic prolegomena influenced the prologue form of various genres of Syriac literature.[19] She gathers together several examples of prolegomena composed for Syriac texts and translations; not surprisingly, these appear in works translated and composed from the time of Mār Abā onwards, especially by figures known to have been associated with him

and the school movement. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Five, both the Syriac translation of Nestorius's apology and self-defense, the *Bazaar of Heracleides*, and a number of the extant examples of the cause genre feature prefaces based upon the question format of the prolegomena literature and date from this period or soon after. Finally, the development of medical studies at the School of Nisibis suggests an Alexandrian background.[20]

We should also recall that the shah at the time, Khosro I (531–79), was known for his patronage of philosophy. Justinian's closure of the Academy in Athens in 529 and the subsequent migration of its faculty to the Persian court would have been approximately synchronous with Mār Abā's trip to Alexandria and Greece. One commonly cited text written in the Sasanian court at this time is Paul the Persian's *Introduction to Logic*, which is dedicated to the King of Kings and was apparently originally composed in Middle Persian.[21] The philosophical interests of the Sasanian court in the sixth century have been known for some time; however, scholars have yet to integrate what we know about these interests into a synthetic understanding of intellectual life in the Sasanian Empire.[22] What we do know is that several men who held the position of Catholicos of the East in Seleucia-Ctesiphon, starting with Mār Abā, showed an interest in philosophical literature which coincided with the intellectual culture developing in the court.

Related to the question of the closing of the Academy in Athens is the theory put forward by M. Tardieu, who argues that when the philosophers returned from the Persian court, some of them settled in Harran, which was known for its philosophical form of paganism that persisted deep into the Islamic period.[23] This city and its pagan community, which would have been just on the other side of the Roman imperial border from Nisibis, has been the suggested origin for the extremely important seventh-century Syriac manuscript British Library Add 14658.[24] Tardieu's theory in effect suggests the existence of a mini-Athens or Alexandria just down the road from Edessa and not far from Nisibis. Unfortunately this theory has been discounted.[25]

Another possible conduit of later philosophical material to Nisibis may have been through the West Syrians, who started to flock into the Persian Empire in the early sixth century. By the seventh century, West-Syrian philosophically oriented intellectuals were applying systematic and consistent methods of translation, originally developed for the translation of scripture, to Aristotle's logical works. They were also composing commentaries to these works.[26] Some of this scholarship was done in Sasanian and, later, Islamic Mesopotamia. We can suppose that West Syrians were engaged in such activities in the vicinity of Nisibis in the sixth century as well, or at least that they were bringing this material into the Sasanian realm at this time. One piece of evidence making this early introduction

of philosophical material into this area by West Syrians more plausible is the career of Simeon of Bēt Aršam, a West Syrian who intentionally went into foreign lands to debate on behalf of the Miaphysite cause.[27] Simeon's nickname was "the Disputer," and he is even said to have beaten the East-Syrian Catholicos himself in a debate. We should recall that Aristotelian logic was a central tool in such debates. Thus, the spread of Aristotle in the Sasanian and then Muslim realms may be understood as part of an escalating philosophical "arms race" between East- and West-Syrians (and eventually Muslims and some Jews).[28] Similarly, we may recall that a focus on logic also fits the ongoing Christological disputes, which were very much based on issues of ontology and semantics. More foundational work needs to be done on the reception of Greek philosophical texts and ideas in Syriac. For example, the earliest Syriac translation of Aristotle's *Categories* is still only in manuscript form.[29]

Beyond the more specific explanations for the influx of philosophical texts into Nisibis, it should be noted how congenial the location of Nisibis would have been for the importation of new ideas. Nisibis was a center of trade, and its position on the route between East and West explains why this city on the periphery of the Persian Empire was so central to Persian Christianity.[30] In fact, the multiple times the population of the city suffered siege suggests that most entities, including both the political and the intellectual, passed from both West to East and East to West through Nisibis.

## A Return to Genesis 1: The *Cause*'s Philosophical Reading of Creation

Judging from the *Cause* itself, whatever the means of this tranmission of philosophical material to Nisibis, it had a strong effect on learning at the School. The *Cause* as a whole attests to the translation of various forms of Greek literature into Syriac by the late sixth century. However, one extended portion of the text (*Cause* 333.8–345.6) demonstrates a clear reliance on philosophical ideas, which it employs to establish a natural theology as well as a working anthropology, psychology, and cosmology. Of course, philosophical terminology could have come into Syriac via several routes. The influence of philosophy on the Syriac language began quite early, as is evidenced by the work of Bardaiṣan and even the prose works of Ephrem.[31] Much of the ancient Greek philosophical *koine* can be found in other literary corpora that were translated into Syriac, such as patristic literature and especially the works of Evagrius of Pontus, who became a key author for the East Syrians by the late sixth century. For example, the portion of the text (*Cause* 333.8–337.6) which addresses God's priority in existence and his epistemological inaccessibility shares

its basic ideas with various texts that could have been found in a fifth-century Edessene milieu, such as John Chrysostom's *Homilies on the Incomprehensibility of God* and Eznik of Kolb's *On God.*[32] Furthermore, there are many obvious connections, both ideational and exegetical, that could be drawn between parts of the *Cause* and the *Homilies* (mēmrē) *on Creation* of Jacob of Sarug and Narsai, both of whom ultimately rely on Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Chapter Six concluded with a discussion of a passage from the *Cause* describing God's interaction with the angels at the time of creation in a classroom where he taught them to read. This passage relies heavily on the ideas of Theodore of Mopsuestia and his exegetical disciple, Narsai, but it also contains a number of Greek philosophical ideas deriving from the reception of Neoplatonic texts and ideas into Syriac. This passage is immediately followed by one that continues the writing metaphor employed to expand on God's fiat in Gen 1:3.

> In a similar manner we have a practice, after we have a child read the simple letters (*ātwātā pšiṭātā*) and repeat them, we join them one to another and from them we compose (*mrakbīnan*) names that he may spell them out (also means: meditate upon them) and be trained. Thus also that eternal teacher did, after he had them repeat the alphabet, then he combined it (*rakbēh*) (the alphabet) in the great name which is the construction of the firmament and he read it in front of them that they might understand that he is the creator of all of them, and as he orders them, they complete his will, [on the six days of Creation]; and thence did he hand over to them the visible creation, that like letters they might write them in their continuous variations and with them spell out (also means: meditate upon) the name of the creator and organizer (*mṭaksānā* from Greek *táxis*) of all. And he let them go and allowed them to be in this place of the school, more spacious than the earth.[33]

Aside from Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on Genesis and its understanding of Genesis 1, this text is dependent on the tradition found in many late antique texts, particularly Jewish ones, such as the *Sepher Yetsirah*, that God used letters to create the world, an idea which seems ultimately to derive from the ambiguous meaning of the Greek word, *stoicheîon*, which can mean both "element" and "letter." However, the word used here, *ātwātā*, does not mean "elements." Rather, it is the plural form of *ātūtā*, which means "sign, character, or letter of the alphabet," but also, interestingly enough, can be the plural of *ātā*, a cognate word (with an equivalent in Hebrew), which means "sign or mark" and is the rendering of the Greek word, *sēmeîon*, such as we find in the Peshitta NT for the "signs" that Jesus performs (e.g., Jn 2:11–18). In other words, in the translation from the Greek, the immediate meaning of "elements" is lost, as *stoicheîa* has been rendered *ātwātā*, which means "letters" or "signs" and never "elements."

The above passage uses metaphors of writing and reading to describe

God's act of creation and the angelic recognition of God's authority in that creation. This fits with Theodore's thought, in particular his notion of analogy.[34] However, the text seems to depend on later Neoplatonic sources in its use of the term "simple letters," a Syriac calque of the Greek *tà haplâ stoicheîa*, which is used to refer to the smallest and therefore indivisible components of matter in Greek physics. Thus, God's act of putting the elements together is likened to his spelling out a word; however, both sides of this simile are conflated inasmuch as the word *and* the thing come into being when God places the letters together. For example, note how the text refers to the word "firmament" as the "the great name which is the construction of the firmament."[35] God creates the name and the thing at the same time. This passage makes more sense if we recall that, according to various Syriac texts from the sixth century onward, God spoke Syriac at the creation.[36] However, this analogy between writing and creating, reading and recognizing the Creator behind the created thing, breaks down in the underlined portion of the above passage. There, the angels are described as writing the visible creation "like letters" "in their continuous variations" and spelling out and/or meditating upon the name of the Creator and organizer of all. This is different from recognizing the Creator in his acts of creation. In contrast to the type of combination God engages in when he creates, that is, combining elements (or "letters"), the angels spell God's name by means of entities that God has already created through various combinations of elements. Moreover, class does not seem to end here: God then sends the angels out into the school of the world, where they spell and meditate upon the name of God. This idea in part depends on Theodore of Mopsuestia's notion of the present world being a school, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, it still is not clear what the angels are doing in this "classroom" nor what it means to spell the name of God—or even meditate upon it—with the letters of the visible creation.

The immediate source for this extended metaphor of writing and reading is certain passages that appear in the corpus of Evagrius of Pontus (345–399). As we will see in Chapter Nine, Evagrius's works were key texts in the Church of the East by the later sixth century. One step in the monastic course of discipline Evagrius advocated was contemplation of the natural order of creation. In this *theōría phusikḗ* the monk attempted to grasp the underlying principles of creation. For Evagrius—and this is essential for understanding the relationship between the East-Syrian school and monastery—this form of contemplation was inferior to later steps in monastic discipline.

Evagrius regularly uses metaphors of reading and writing to talk about this *theōría phusikḗ*.[37] For example, his *Letter to Melania*, which serves as an important summary of a number of Evagrius's main ideas, employs a

formulaic epistolary opening on the need to use letters to communicate with those who are absent as a metaphor for the way that God relies on creation as an intermediary in his contact with those who are distant from him. The letter begins:

> You know, good Sir, that if those who are far apart from each other, separated by a long distance (something which is apt to happen for many varied reasons), want to know or to make known to each other, their respective intentions and secrets (which should not be learnt by everyone, but only by those who have a mind akin to their own), they do this by means of letters (*ktībātā*).[38]

Evagrius continues in the vein for a while and then finally reveals his intention in discussing these matters.

> Now all these things which are done through letters, are a kind of symbol of the things which in truth are done by those who are far apart from God. For those who are far from God have made a separation between themselves and their Creator by their loathsome works. But God, out of his love, has provided creation as a mediator: it is like letters.[39]

It is important to emphasize how this type of apperception of the divine is for Evagrius a distant second to more immediate contemplation of the divine. It is only a first step towards the invisible via the visible.[40] The intimacy of such a knowledge of God is secondhand and differs from higher knowledge of God, just as epistolary correspondence differs from personal interaction.[41] This writing metaphor shows up numerous times in Evagrius's works, including his *Kephalaia Gnostica*, and it seems that the *Cause* is relying on it in its own extended metaphorical usage.[42]

The reading and writing that occurs in the classroom of creation represents Evagrius's notion of *theōría phusikḗ*; however, as I hope to demonstrate in the much of what follows, the *Cause* depends heavily on later Neoplatonic sources in its understanding and communication of this idea. The continual reshuffling of creation in order to spell out the name of the Creator refers to the use of language and rationality, which are related terms in both Greek and Syriac (Gr. *lógos* and Syr. *meltā* and their various cognates). Language and rationality are tools for analyzing the created order so that we may learn about God, the Creator who is essentially unknowable.

At the end of this chapter I will suggest that these notions derive also from a prior Syriac background, in addition to the works of Evagrius of Pontus and a Neoplatonic appropriation of Aristotelian logic, inasmuch as they represent a developed version of ideas found in the fourth-century writings of Ephrem of Nisibis. Notions found in works of Ephrem as well as the writing of Evagrius provide a framework upon which is laid much of the Greek philosophical material the *Cause* employs. Furthermore,

by examining this material and the way it conveys the idea of "spelling out names with creation," which we find in the *Cause*, we will also better understand how the *Cause* addresses human history and the human schools that follow the angelic one.[43] For even when it turns from the angelic school in heaven to the history of human schools, the *Cause* describes "with what letters he (i.e., God) composed names, so it (i.e., the human school) could read and be instructed."[44] Thus, the metaphors of reading and writing and their extrapolation in the *Cause* are central for understanding the text's anthropology.

## The Natural Theology of the *Cause* (333.8–345.6)

After his introductory statements, the speaker in the *Cause* turns to a discussion of God's priority in existence (*Cause* 333.8–334.15), beginning with the question of how we are able to investigate God (*Cause* 333.8–334.6). This investigation into God is different from the investigation into all other entities. The text posits that there are three "orders" by which something may be understood ("according to its order," "above its order," and "below its order") (Syriac *ṭaksā* from Greek *táxis*; *Cause* 333.8–12).[45] For example, the human being "according to its order" consists of body and soul, while God is above the human order and animals are below it. God is different from other beings because he can only be examined according to his order and below it.

> God is spoken about (*metmallal ʿlaw*[*hy*]) in two ways by creatures, either "as he exists" or "below the way he exists." But "above the way he exists" it is not possible to speak (*netmallal*). For if we say (*āmrīnan*) that he is eternally existent, infinite spirit, the cause of all, this is defined about him (*eṭḥatmat ʿlaw*[*hy*])) "as the order." But if we say (*netmallal*) he is composed (*mrakbā*) and bodily, ignorant and needful, this is composed about him (*etrakbat ʿlaw*[*hy*]) "below the order" and inexactly.[46]

Implicit here is the notion that since it is impossible to conceive of anything greater than God we can not say anything about him above his order. Furthermore, to attribute certain things to him, such as a body, would be to suggest that he is below the order he holds.

Investigation into something begins with how we speak about it, and this focus on speaking correctly about things resembles the Neoplatonists' method: semantics is the first step towards epistemology and ontology. The focus on what we say about something in a discussion of how we "comprehend" and "investigate" it seems to derive from the Neoplatonic practice of drawing an explicit connection between words, things, and concepts. Neoplatonic texts regularly conflate these three very different ontological modes. In the prolegomenon to his commentary on the *Categories*, Ammonius explains that commentators in the past have disagreed

as to whether the *Categories* treats words (*phōnaí*), things (*prágmata*), or concepts (*noḗmata*). He resolves this dispute by suggesting that all were in part correct. "The Philosopher's aim here, therefore, is to treat words that mean things through mediating concepts."[47] This explains why the investigation into things in this section entails *saying* something about them. While Aristotle's *Categories* has perplexed contemporary philosophers as to its intended purpose,[48] in antiquity it was understood by some, including the Neoplatonists, to be a preface to Aristotle's logical works, "giving a theory of the meanings of the terms of which propositions are composed."[49]

The use in this passage and elsewhere in the *Cause* of the passive form of the verbs "to say" and "to speak" derives from the Syriac translation of the Greek *légesthai* and *katēgoreîsthai.* [50] In later standardized translations of Greek texts *katēgoreîsthai* is rendered by the quadralitteral root *qṭrg,* but early translations were not standardized and different forms were used. The early sixth-century Syriac translation of the *Isagoge* regularly uses the passive form of the Syriac "to say" (*'mar*) as an equivalent of both Greek verbs and, like the *Cause,* uses the preposition "*'al*" for the Greek "*katá.*"[51]

The connection between speaking of something and inquiring into it is similar to the conflation of object and name that occurs in the discussion of the creation narrative of the *Cause.* The very fact that how we speak about something is a methodological concern points to a philosophical awareness of the difference between object and speech, but the conflation that occurs at the same time suggests a confusion between the two. The origins of this conflation between thing and name are unclear: it may derive from both a "Semitic" and a Neoplatonic background.[52] Furthermore, stemming from ambiguities in the use of the Greek *lógos,* the relation between words for "speech" and "reason" in Syriac would have contributed to this confusion: *meltā* means "word," "speech," or "reason"; *mlīlā* means "capable of speech" and "capable of reason."

Another verbal connection to Greek texts is the use of the verb "to define" in the Syriac, which, especially in the passive form, as it is used here, is a calque of the Greek *horízesthai.*[53] The impersonal usage, "it is defined about him," fits the Greek equivalent but also avoids the questionable implications of a statement such as "God is defined," which would impute a limitation to God.

The two different usages of the word "compose" (*rakkeb*) in this passage need to be explicated, especially since "composition" (*rukkābā*) is a key concept in the description of God creating the world at *Cause* 348.4–349.13. In the sentence, "But if we say he is composed (*mrakbā*) and bodily, ignorant and needful, this is composed (*etrakbat*) about him 'below the order' and inexactly,"[54] we find two different usages of the Syriac word *rakkeb,* "to compose," "to compound," or "to combine."[55]

According to the first usage, God cannot be "composed," because

implicit in such a claim would be that he is a created being. Something that is composed has parts that have been put together and at some point could be taken apart again; God is therefore certainly a unity.[56] An earlier Syriac equivalent to the text's avoidance of referring to God as "composed" is found in Narsai's *Homilies on Creation*, where God is called "he who is without combination" (*d-lā rukkābā*).[57] Narsai regularly uses *rakkeb* as the verb to describe what God does when he puts together body and soul to form the human being. Thus, by referring to God in this way, Narsai means to draw a contrast between the uncomposed God and the composed human being. A connection to Narsai's usage may be seen in this passage's example of what we can say about the human being according to his order, that is, that he is "soul and body."[58] The *Cause*'s use of the adjective, instead of the noun as in Narsai, is in accord with general shifts in Syriac morphological usage in the sixth century, the proliferation of adjectives and attributive participles in Syriac reflecting an imitation of Greek prose where the two are common.

However, Narsai's text does not fully illuminate the usage of the word "composed" in this passage. The attributive adjective, "composed," seems to be a translation equivalent of the Greek *súntheton*, the opposite of the Greek word *haplóos*, "simple." Ammonius's commentary on the *Categories* serves as a framework for understanding the Syriac.

> Some substance is simple, some composite. Some simple substance is better than composite, some is inferior. Man and things of that sort are composite substances. The substance of the gods is simple substance that is better than the composite. Simple substance that is inferior to the composite is prime matter and form. These latter <two> gain recognition on account of the composites, and things recognized because of something else are always inferior to that on account of which they are recognized. . . . But Aristotle will not discuss here what is simple and superior to the composite (for that is theology), nor what is simple and inferior to the composite (for that is the inquiry into natural causes and phenomena [*physiologia*]), but rather the composite and relational, insofar as it is signified in such a way.[59]

The *Cause* follows Ammonius in the idea that there are two kinds of simple entity: God, who is greater than all combined entities, and the basic building blocks of the world, which are for the *Cause* the simple letters. God's lack of combination makes him unknowable, since the *Cause* seems to follow the Neoplatonic idea that knowledge in this world is based upon the knowledge of parts of a whole. However, God not being composite in his substance does not mean that logical conclusions cannot be "composed" about him. This leads to the second use of *rakkeb* in the passage above.

The second usage of *rakkeb*, "it is composed" (*etrakbat*), stems directly

from the Syriac translations of Aristotle's logical works. In the beginning of the *Categories,* Aristotle writes: "Of things that are said, some involve combination while others are said without combination" (1a16–17). The *Categories* deals with things said without combination by describing the different types of predicates. Things said with combination are first addressed in the next work in the *Organon, De Interpretatione.*[60] To be said with combination means to have a subject and a predicate and, as Aristotle emphasizes, for any statement to be judged according to its veracity it must have a subject and a predicate.

> For falsity and truth have to do with combination and separation. Thus names and verbs by themselves—for instance "man" or "white" when nothing further is added—are like the thoughts that are without combination and separation; for so far they are neither true nor false.[61]

The later Neoplatonic commentators, in their clarification and drawing out of Aristotle's thought, present a system of increasing complexity as further combinations are made on the way to truth.[62] A word is a combination of letters or sounds; words are combined as subject and predicate to form a simple proposition; and simple propositions combine to form complex ones, until we have the syllogism and the ability to reason.

Ammonius even explains the order of the works of the *Organon* by this increasing combination:

> Moreover, the order is immediately obvious to us, since we said that the first application of simple words precedes <that of> nouns and verbs, whereas nouns and verbs <precede> simple propositions, and they <precede> universal syllogisms, and they <precede> demonstrative syllogisms. It is with reference to the order of these things, accordingly, that the books have been composed as well.[63]

This same understanding of the order of the *Organon* can be found in the introduction to Probus's sixth-century Syriac commentary on *De Interpretatione.*[64] He writes: "Truth and falsehood come into being by combined thoughts and by combined sounds."[65] Ammonius's understanding of the movement from simple to complex can be seen in many passages in the Neoplatonic corpus. For the commentators, combination and division are opposite sides of the same coin. For example, Philoponus writes in his commentary on *De Anima*:

> 430b3 *It is also possible, however, to say that all things are division.*
> He has said that "not white" is put together with "snow" and that "all things" are composition, even denials (for "snow is not white" is a denial). This being so he says that just as we have called all things composition, so we can call them all division. For every proposition divides into a subject and a predicate term, and besides, what is composite is composed in any case of divided things; of this nature too

are propositions composed of terms. If, therefore, starting from composites we understand simple things, we have division; if starting from divided things we understand a composite, we have composition.[66]

Division (Syriac *pullāgā*), also plays an important role in the *Cause* for example, in its version of the Tree of Porphyry (see below).[67] The commentators draw an analogy between the distinct processes of combination and division, processes that are also related to one another in the *Cause.* For example, the sixth-century Alexandrian commentator Elias writes:

A property of analytic is to take some composite thing and analyze it into the simple things out of which it is composed, just as speech is analyzed into words (*léxeis*), words into syllables, and syllables into letters.[68]

The opposing terms "simple" and "composite" and the physical and figurative notions implicit in them are prevalent in the commentators to such an extent that they serve as a basis for their whole method and approach.[69]

To sum up the above, for Ammonius and the commentators the word "composite" can be used to describe substances or expressions. God is not a combined or composite entity, and, being simple, he can thus not be known, since something is known by its parts. The only way to know something which is simple is by a more immediate apprehension or intuition,[70] or through combined or composite statements made about that entity. Thus, knowledge of God is formed synthetically, but God is not a synthetic.

Now that the text has established that our investigation of God is limited to how he exists—that is as "eternally existent, infinite spirit, the cause of all"[71]—it moves on to discuss the two different kinds of being (*Cause* 334.7–334.15). By relying on the basic philosophical division between the two verbs "to be" in Greek, *eînai* and *gígnesthai*—in Syriac *ītaw*(*hy*) and *hwā* respectively—the text compares God's being to that of creation's. Both God and creation exist, but since God has neither beginning nor end and brought everything else into being, he is the only one who can be described as truly existent.

Although the distinction between the two verbs "to be" is common in Greek literature and certainly did not come into Syriac solely via the translation of philosophical material, the distinction as it is maintained in the *Cause* would no doubt have been reinforced by such philosophical literature.

Furthermore, the first lines of this section seem to rely on a distinction between "universal" and "particular" that derives from Aristotelian logic. In *De Interpretatione,* Aristotle writes:

Now of actual things some are universal, others particular (I call universal that which is by its nature predicated of a number of things, and particular that which is not; man, for instance, is a universal, Callias is not).[72]

The "universal" is often rendered in Syriac with words based on the Syriac *gawwā*. The Greek for "particular" is rendered with *īḥīdāyā*.[73]

For although this expression "exists" is equal in respect to the universal (*gawwā*) and also the particular (*īḥīdāyā*), nevertheless it fits and agrees exactly with him alone.[74]

Despite their earlier usage, the two terms "universal" and "particular" as they are used here correspond to the Aristotelian source.[75]

Moreover, the usage of "equal" (*šwā*) in this passage seems to depend on the first chapter of the *Categories* and its commentary tradition. Aristotle distinguishes between synonyms and homonyms. Synonyms are words that share both name and definition. According to Ammonius, "This is the way that genera are predicated of their species, for man is called animal and is also a sensible animate substance."[76] In contrast, homonyms are words that share the same name but differ in definition. Homonyms are thus similar only in name, not in nature.[77] The Syriac root *š-w-'* is equivalent to the Greek prefix *homo-*. For example, Probus, following a Greek source, writes: "the expression equal in name (*šawyat šmā*) (is divided) into different significations, such as the expression 'dog' into 'sea dog' (i.e., shark) and 'land dog'."[78] The *Cause* thus argues in this section that the word "exists" as it is applied to God and as it is applied to all beings is a homonym: it is the same word, but means something very different in each case.[79]

The text then turns to the issue of the epistemological inaccessibility of God (*Cause* 335.1–337.6). God has no beginning and no names fit him (*Cause* 335.1–13). He existed alone before creation and knew himself in a way that creatures could never know him. While some of the terminology in this section may derive from later philosophical sources, parallels for much of the content of this section can be found in fifth- and early sixth-century Greek and Syriac writers. For example, the idea of analogy here can be found in Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on Genesis and is a contributing factor to the natural theology developed in this whole section of the *Cause*.[80] According to the *Cause*, names can only be attributed to God by analogy, since he can not "be spoken or conceived of by rational beings" in the manner "in which he knew himself."[81] The earlier patristic background of some of this material can be seen in the fact that, like the writer of the *Cause*, Jacob of Sarug describes God as existing without a name before creation and alone taking pleasure in himself.[82] The use twice of the adverb *ītyā'īt* may have a Neoplatonic,

philosophical origin, but this word, reflecting the Greek *ousiōdôs*, could also derive from a patristic author or Evagrius of Pontus.[83]

Although God is not compound or composite, combined or composite statements can be made about him. God's lack of combination corresponds with the *Cause*'s strong emphasis that it is impossible for the divine essence (*ītūtā*) to be "spoken about" or "conceived of by rational beings."

> While in these things of his (*hālēn dīlēh*) he exists ineffably (*lā metmallānā'īt*), since thought has neither place, nor also time, which begins from movement, nor movement, which adheres to essence (*ītūtā*), *far from* there *more than that which was farness*—for he is *the depth of depths*, not to be searched out or *discovered* (Eccl 7:23–4)—thought does not have a path by which to go as far as that Lordship, loftier than the trodden paths and ways of the mind, the swift messenger of the soul. Because the mind does not have a path by which to go there, also speech (*meltā*), a swift horse of four feet, is lame and abstains from the course. Since thought, which is guide and tutor of speech—the pupils of its eyes are blind, and it would not be able to search into that powerful light, if our Lord himself had not performed his grace in us and revealed and showed us concerning his essence (*yātēh*), albeit in a manner fit only for children (*āfēn šabrā'īt*.). . . . But if not, not even this crumb of knowledge would be able to fix its gaze on that divine presence, since all of those things of his go unspeakably beyond the thought and reason of created things. For also that which we should know that we do not know, in my opinion, goes beyond knowledge.[84]

This next passage addresses the impossibility of knowing God, if not for his grace. The very beginning further demonstrates a philosophical background if we translate the phrase "these things of his" more fully as "these things proper to him." This is plausible, since the Syriac *dīlēh* is cognate with the Syriac word for "property" (*dīlāyūtā*, Gr. *ídion*), which is used elsewhere in the *Cause*.[85] The philosophical sense of the word would be appropriate, since the text is talking about God's complete transcendence of the world. In Porphyry's *Isagoge*, "property" is defined as being dissimilar from "difference" in that it is convertible with the species to which it belongs. Porphyry writes: "It is a property of difference that it is often predicated of many *species*, as rational is predicated of god and man, but property is predicated of the single species it belongs to." For example, human beings have the capacity to laugh and the capacity to laugh belongs to human beings alone.[86] Thus, God exists "in," or perhaps "with" (Syr. *b-*), his own properties, that is, the characteristics that belong to him alone.

We have already seen above the philosophical implications of the use of "to say" or "to speak." The adverb translated as "ineffably" (*lā metmallānā'īt*) has similar implications, though it could also derive from Evagrius of Pontus. This use of "ineffably" is related to the use of "speech" (*meltā*), a cognate word in the Syriac. To paraphrase the first sentence of this quotation, God exists ineffably, and just as thought and knowledge

cannot reach him neither can speech. As above, speech and thought are again tied to one another: to talk about something and to think about it are mutually inclusive acts.

The clause after the first phrase in 336.1 ultimately depends on Aristotle, according to whom discursive thought requires place, time, and movement,

> since thought has neither place, nor also time, which begins from movement, nor movement, which adheres to essence, . . . .[87]

The Syriac *ḥuššābā*, "thought," perhaps reflects the Greek *logismós* (as opposed to, for example, *nóēsis*, which means "intuition"). The phrase "thought has neither place" (Syr. *atrā l-ḥuššābā layt*) seems to derive from the Greek usage of *tópos* (perhaps the idiom "*échein tópon*").

God does not change, and thus time and movement, both characteristics of the natural world, have no effect on him. Movement (*zawʿā*) is equivalent to the Greek *kínēsis*, which Aristotle himself suggests is not altogether different from the Greek *metabolḗ* ("change").[88] Time does not exist without change or without movement.[89] Therefore, time can only begin with advent of movement and change.[90] This issue was taken up in a no longer extant treatise of Sergius of Rēšʿaynā.[91]

The word "essence" (*ītūtā*), used above, often renders the Greek *ousía* but, since in Christological discussions the East Syrians often use *kyānā* with a meaning close to *ītūtā* and since *kyānā* is a word commonly used to translate the Greek *phúsis*, there is a possibility that *ītūtā* may derive from *phúsis* in this instance. Aristotle writes: "For nature is the principle and cause of motion and rest for those things, and those things only, in which she inheres primarily, as distinct from incidentally."[92] A Syriac scholion reads: "Definition of nature: the principle of movement and repose."[93] The word "adheres," Syr. *nāqep*, is used to translate several Greek words, including *hépesthai*,[94] *akoloúthein*,[95] *hyphistánai*,[96] and *hypárchein*.[97] The verb *nāqep* can be variously translated in its philosophical usage as "follows, is concomitant with, joined to, belongs to."

Further analysis would be required to discover all the sources for the rich imagery of this passage. Comparable terms can be found in literatures other than the philosophical, such as in the Evagrian corpus. The metaphorical description of the word as a lame horse derives ultimately from Plato's *Phaedrus*, but may have been mediated via any number of sources.[98] Similarly, the description of the mind or soul as an eye blinded by ignorance or sin is a common motif, again deriving from Plato.[99] Some of the language may also be biblically inspired, such as the "paths and ways."[100]

The word used for "essence" in the phrase "revealed and showed us concerning his essence"[101] is not *ītūtā*, the word used in the rest of the

*Cause*. Rather, it is *yāt*, which means both essence and self. Thus another possible translation of this line is "revealed and showed us concerning himself." This word has a very interesting history, but suffice it to say that Syriac speakers (despite the philological inaccuracy) would have believed it to be cognate with *ītūtā* and other Syriac words based upon the existential particle *īt*, meaning "there is," which, as stated above, serves as a common translation equivalent of the Greek *eînai*, "to be, to exist."[102]

The two collections of scriptural quotations in *Cause* 335.10–13 and 336.1–337.6 are integral to understanding the *Cause*'s argument, and particularly its notion of natural theology. The quotations from scripture are combined to convey intertextually many of the pedagogical ideas the text has expressed already in more rarified terms. For example, the quotation from Rom 1:19 comes from a passage (Rom 1:18–23), which has long been central to discussions of Paul's natural theology.[103] These scriptural quotations, all pertaining to the knowledge of God, provide a smooth transition to the next section (*Cause* 337.7–339.14), which addresses the means by which human beings are able to learn about the divine.

First, the *Cause* raises two questions: How do we learn about the divine essence (*ītūtā*)ĕ and what is the difference between the Creator and the created? The first question is put off (until *Cause* 340.1ff), while the second question is addressed immediately here. The text notes that the appellation "created" includes under itself many genera and species. The Aristotelian concept of the "universal" appears here,[104] while the idea of homonymity is used throughout.[105]

The text then turns to the complex division of all things that exist (*Cause* 337.13–338.[10]). This passage ultimately derives from the Tree of Porphyry, a famous paragraph from Porphyry's *Isagoge*, or *Introduction to the Categories*, in which, as an example of the genus-species hierarchy, Porphyry presents a list of increasing specificity through a sample definition of the human being.[106] This list runs from substance, through corporeal, animate (i.e., ensouled), living (i.e., percipient), and rational, until finally we reach the human being. The Tree as presented in the *Cause* has undergone various changes, most of which depend on further distinctions made by later Neoplatonic commentators. What is significant is that a diagram developed as an exercise for the study of logic is being used as a description of the order and diversity of creation. Thus, as often is the case, the logical becomes also the ontological. The distinction between words, concepts, and things (for the Neoplatonists, *tà prágmata*, *tà noḗmata*, and *haì phōnaí*) is elided: how we talk and think about things reflects the actual order of things as it truly is.

The excellence of different entities is judged not by their being but by their substance (*Cause* 338.11–339.6). The distinction between "universal" and "particular" is again employed. Being is a universal; substance

is a particular.[107] "Something is excellent not in that it is, but rather in what and how it is." Excellence is defined by difference: God is different by his "eternality."

After further discussion of how different genera and species interrelate, the text explains that we are only able to speak about God because lower entities are able to take on the names of higher ones (*Cause* 339.7–14).

> Although he is so high in his nature, exalted in his lordship, and distinct from everything which has come into being, nevertheless he took it upon himself to be said (*net'emar*) and spoken of (*netmallal*) in the compound language (*mamlā mrakbā*) of creatures, for the sake of our learning.[108]

This is an explicit statement of what the text seems to have been saying all along. The unknowable, simple—or rather, not composite—God condescends to be spoken of by us so we can learn about him. We see here the combination of the idea of God's humble condescension being combined with Neoplatonic views on language and its necessity in the material world. The connections formed by the links between different genera and species in the Tree allow for this knowledge of God.

The Tree of Porphyry appears in the *Cause* not as a didactic tool for understanding the genus/species relations of Aristotelian logic, which is its original function, but as a dogmatic description of the order of reality, a summary of the great chain of being. The alterations from Porphyry's original Tree show developments in later Neoplatonic philosophy as well as Christian intellectuals' concerns to incorporate into this philosophical model a psychology acceptable to Christians.

At the beginning of the previous section the text raised the question of how we receive learning about God. An answer is provided by the text's description of the lamp of the soul and the illuminated mind (*Cause* 340.1–341.7), a description which relies on a characterization of knowledge and understanding as illumination, common to many Platonic thinkers. This idea of illumination is in accord with the limited access that the mind has to God. For neither angels nor human beings can actually "contemplate the divine essence."[109] After an extensive metaphor on the soul as an "invisible lamp"[110] that God has put within us and which is lit by the "light of the divine mind," the text then introduces the Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk 15:8–10), via the connecting word "lamp." However, the text goes against the tenor of the Lucan original and interprets the parable as an esoteric statement about our capacity to know God.

The text uses the Parable of the Lost Coin to express a theology emphasizing the hiddenness of the divine image. The human being via the illumination of the soul can find the hidden image of God in the "rich treasury of his kingdom." Reason will help us "see," or rather more significantly, "distinguish," that which is hidden. Our mind, which is rational

and illuminated—two terms which seem to be one and the same here—is itself a likeness of God because of its dependence on the divine light for its ignition. This mind belongs to both human beings and angels, those who "walk within the open plain of air."[111] As will be made clear later, this process of finding the image through reason is the act of spelling the name of God with the letters of creation. It is the natural theology that this text presupposes.

Earlier it was established that both angels and human beings are able to learn about the divine essence through the "illuminated mind." The text now turns to address "how it (i.e., the mind) is in us and what sort is its place of dwelling"[112] (*Cause* 341.8–342.5). The author counters the "wise men of the Greeks" who "would attribute the name of divinity to it (i.e., the mind)" by suggesting that the foundation of the mind is the soul "which is fettered within us."[113] Much of the terminology in the description of the mind's guidance of the parts of the soul derives from philosophical sources.

The different cognitive faculties of the soul come from Aristotle via the commentators. The soul has five cognitive powers, and these are divided by the commentary tradition into three logical and two nonlogical parts.[114] The three logical ones are what appear here.[115]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cognitive Faculties | = ḥaylē yaddūʿtānē | = dunámeis gnōstikaí[116] |
| (1) Reason | = hawnā | = noûs |
| (2) Thought | = tarʿītā | = diánoia |
| (3) Reckoning[117] | = maḥšabtā | = dóxa |

Similar cognitive faculties show up in the sixth-century Syriac commentary on the *Prior Analytics* attributed to Probus.[118]

In contrast to the three logical cognitive faculties of the soul, there are the three appetitive powers, which come from Aristotle's *De Anima.*[119]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Desire | = regtā | = epithūmía |
| Anger | = ḥemtā | = thūmós |
| Will | = ṣebyānā | = boúlēsis |

These three standard forms of appetite (*órexis*) can be found in the same Syriac forms in the "Discourse on the Causes of the Universe," the work by Alexander of Aphrodisias attributed to Sergius of Rēšʿaynā in the seventh-century manuscript British Library Add. 14658.[120]

When the text states that "mind is above all these things, as a wise charioteer and a ready captain,"[121] it is relying on two metaphors that ultimately go back to Plato. These two metaphors are commonplace and are often found next to one another. It is striking that both of these Greek

words, *hēníochos* meaning "charioteer" and *kubernḗtēs* meaning "steersman," were taken up in Syriac and would have been recognizable to the text's purported audience.[122] Although the source is unclear, such a usage was especially common in philosophical texts and the two terms used together in this way certainly suggest a philosophical provenance.[123] However, ship metaphors in general, such as the extended one in this passage, are common in classical literature and appear in Syriac as well.[124]

The two sets of faculties that the text describes as being purified are equivalent to those mentioned above, despite their different names. The Greek equivalencies are:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cognitive Faculties | = ḥaylē yādōʿē | = energeíai gnōstikaí / dunámeis |
| Animal Faculties | = ḥaylē ḥayyūtānē | = energeíai zōtikaí |

Animal is another way of referring to the appetitive powers of the soul.[125]

The distinction between the two parts of philosophy, the speculative or theoretical and the practical, is standard in the Neoplatonic commentary tradition (as well as in other philosophical literature).[126] On occasion these two parts of philosophy are equated with different parts of the soul, as we find in the *Cause*, where these two parts of philosophy are mapped onto the two parts of the soul. The text is a bit unclear, inasmuch as it conflates parts of the soul, capacities of the soul, and the different parts of philosophy. The cognitive, or intellectual, and the active, or effectual, portions of the soul, both of which are part of a purifying process, are also clearly based originally on Greek terms.[127]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Intellectual Portion | = mnātā yaddūʿtānītā | = méros theōrētikón |
| Effectual Portion | = mnātā sāʿōrtā | = méros praktikón |

All the parts of the soul, as well as the notion of purification that we find in this portion of the text, appear in a passage from Sergius of Rēšʿaynā's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*, a work closer to its Neoplatonic roots than the *Cause*, which builds on the philosophical technical terminology with concrete visual metaphors.[128] The "rational and illuminated mind" has the ability to purify the different capacities of the soul by means of its "intellectual" and "effectual" parts. Purification allows the mind to "grasp the truth and exactitude of things" and maintains that the mind's "movements" will be "suitable and right." The *Cause* relates how rationality serves the mind in these endeavors (*Cause* 342.6–344.7).

It begins with a long simile on rationality and how it mediates in the mind's interaction with the diversity of creation.[129] The sea metaphor, based upon a common analogy of the world to the sea,[130] continues the

text's earlier likening of the mind to a captain. It is important to note that the defining characteristic of the world in this section is its diversity and the opposition that exists in it.[131] By "opposition" (*saqūblāyūtā*) the text is referring to the opposition of different created entities to one another, an idea that ties the passage to Aristotelian physics, but no doubt through some intermediary.[132]

The text then describes how rationality serves as an aid for the perfection (*šumlāyā*) of knowledge (*īdaʿtā*) and action (*sāʿōrūtā*). Further dependence is clearly demonstrated by the way the text defines the perfection of the two corresponding parts of the mind. Perfection has an opposite that relates to it in the way that color relates to body or accident to essence.[133] The analogy that color is to body as accident is to essence is Aristotelian. The terms the *Cause* uses here seem to reflect similar Greek ones used by Ammonius in a discussion of the same issues.[134]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Knowledge | = īdaʿtā | = gnôsis, theōría |
| Action | = sāʿōrūtā | = prâxis |
| Perfection | = šumlāyā | = teleíōsis |

Concerning Aristotle's works, Ammonius writes the following:

> Among the school <works> some are theoretical, some are practical, and some instrumental. The theoretical ones are concerned with the discrimination of the true and the false; the practical ones are concerned with the <discrimination> of the good and the bad. But since in the theoretical realm some things creep in as apparently true without being true, and similarly in the practical realm some things are coloured with the name of good without being good, we need some instrument to discriminate such things. What is it? Demonstration.[135]

According to Ammonius, it is "logic" that "discriminates for us the true from the false and the good from the bad."[136] Much of the material cited here from Ammonius is reiterated by later Neoplatonists.[137] The transfer of this material into Syriac can be seen in Sergius's commentary on the *Categories*: "Logic is the instrument that clearly distinguishes in knowledge the true from the false and in practice defines again the good from the bad."[138] Probus in the sixth century also follows the Neoplatonic model:

> For when art sought to adorn the soul, it saw that there are two faculties of the soul, the intellectual and the active. The intellectual is that one by which we know things; the active is that one by which we do things. While art wants to adorn that intellectual (faculty) and that active (faculty), it sent out two parts, that is, theory and practice, that through theory it might adorn the intellectual (faculty) and through practice the active (faculty). For theory teaches about the cognition of things, practice about the correcting of habits.[139]

The *Cause* is clearly working within the same tradition as Probus, Sergius, and the Greek Neoplatonic tradition that lies behind them. Clarifying this material is especially important because the notion of rationality, which the *Cause* seems to derive from the commentaries, plays such an important role throughout much of the text.

Rationality is a tool that allows the schools that will be described through the rest of the *Cause* to function.

> It is certain then that without rationality it (truth) is not distinguished correctly or known by those who judge these things in a human manner (*'nāšā'īt*). For he who does not speak in the divine spirit, his teaching will be in need of rational demonstrations for it to be believed by those who hear it.[140]

A passage from Sergius's introduction to the *Categories* is quite similar:

> Without all this (i.e., Aristotle's works on logic) neither can the meaning of writings on medicine be grasped, nor can the opinions of the philosophers be known, nor indeed the true sense of the divine scriptures in which the hope of our salvation is revealed – unless a person receive divine power as a result of the exalted nature of his way of life, with the result that he has no need of human training. As far as human power is concerned, however, there can be no other course or path to all the areas of knowledge except by way of training in Logic.[141]

Both of these appear to be Christian versions of an apology, which shows up in the Neoplatonic literature, for the human reliance on language. After the first lemma in his commentary on the *Categories*, Ammonius writes:

> If souls were on high, separate from the body, each of them would on its own know all things, without need of anything else. But they descend at birth and are bound up with the body, and filled up with its fog, their sight becomes dim and they are not able to know things it is in their nature to know. This is why they need to communicate with one another, the voice serving their needs in conveying their thoughts to one another. Now everything is made known both by a name and by an account (*lógos*).[142]

The fallen state of the soul posited by the Neoplatonists differs from the Christian understanding of how the human being fits into the world that we find in texts such as Sergius's commentary and the *Cause*; however, the two are parallel in that for both language is a compensation, a second-best form of communication. The two Christian texts also seem to point to a potential tension that can arise in Christian "scholasticism": however much reason and logic are needed for right knowledge, human virtue and divine grace can always serve as a shortcut to the same kind of knowledge. This issue will come up again in Chapter Nine in my discussion of monastic criticism of the life and intellectual practice of the schools.

So far the text has articulated the significance of reason as a tool by which we may know true from false and right from wrong and, more importantly, acquire learning about God. Reason, however, needs the diversity of the world to be able to function. In fact, the creation of the world is the establishment of the logical structure derived from the Tree of Porphyry, genera, species, and all. This diversity is required for the rational mind to function, since the *Cause*, like Aristotle, has a representative view of knowledge. This means that we know things by making images in our heads about them ("And it is not possible to think without an image.").[143] For Aristotle thinking and perceiving are analogous activities.[144]

To the thinking soul images serve as if they were contents of perception (and when it asserts or denies them to be good or bad it avoids or pursues them). That is why the soul never thinks without an image. The process is like that in which the air modifies the pupil in this or that way and the pupil transmits the modification to some third thing (and similarly in hearing), while the ultimate point of arrival is one, a single mean, with different manners of being.[145]

The source of knowledge for Aristotle is perception (as opposed to Plato, who puts the intellect first). From perception we use imagination to form an image to think with. Aristotle compares the mind to a writing tablet.[146] These Aristotelian metaphors help us to make sense of this section of the *Cause*, which takes up the text's earlier theme of composition/combination.

Therefore by this wonderful instrument (Gr. *órganon*) of rationality the mind paints all the adorned images of exact knowledge and by it casts a glorious statue of that prototype (i.e., God). So that the intelligence and the rationality of this mind are neither idle nor useless—since it has no alphabet by which it might compose (*nrakkeb*) names and read them syllable by syllable, receive teaching about that essence, and then demonstrate the authority of his Lordship—necessarily as a training exercise and a sign of its (i.e., the mind's) freedom, the Creator established this corporeality and adorned it with powers and colors, and he divided it up into genera and species and differentiated it by figures and activities, and he conferred upon it individual properties. He brought it (i.e., corporeality) in and set it in this spacious gulf between heaven and earth. As if upon some tablet he wrote and composed (*rakkeb*) all the visible bodies that it (i.e., mind) might read them and from them know that one who was the cause of this learning, as Paul said: *They seek and search for God and from his creation they find him* (Acts 17:27), that it might take delight in desirable goods, be profited by its wonderful beauties, plait and set upon his head a crown of joys, adorned with the beauties and praises of that good Lord.[147]

The mind—in this case, the human one—can learn about the Creator through the diverse order of creation. This is because the ordered system of Aristotelian logic is not an invention of the mind, but rather reflects the order that God has imposed on creation. According to the

*Cause*, aside from revelation all knowledge of God is synthetic and representational. The mind through the tool of rationality paints an image.[148] As the above quotation states, God composed creation so that the mind could compose names and read. The use of Aristotelian metaphor in more concrete terms is apparent in other parts of the *Cause*; for example, in its discussion of the first human school, that of Adam, the *Cause* describes letters, a writing tablet, and the composition of names: this passage metaphorically externalizes the mental processes of the protoplast.[149]

The reliance on Greek concepts in this section can be seen in the following chart demonstrating the Syriac and Greek equivalencies:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Instrument | = organāwn | = órganon |
| Powers | = ḥaylē | = dunámeis (or energeíai) |
| Colors | = gawnē | = chrṓmata |
| Genera | = gensē | = génē |
| Species | = ādšē | = eídē |
| Figures | = eskēmē | =schḗmata |
| Activities | = maʿbdānwātā | = energeíai (or dunámeis) |
| Individual Properties | = dīlāyātā īḥīdāyātā | = ídia |

The word *schema* is commonly used in Syriac; like the Greek word from which it derives, it has a diversity of meanings. In a discussion of creation it is fitting that the *Cause* uses this word to describe the different constructions of the world. For example, Jacob of Sarug uses it in his *Homilies on Creation* to refer to the different structures of the created world.[150] However, in a context where logic is being addressed this word can also be taken to mean "logical figures," the basic configuration of argument in Aristotle's syllogistic. There is an extant scholion attributed to Sergius of Rēšʿaynā which deals with the schema in this way, thus showing that the word had such a meaning in Syriac by this date.[151] Appropriately, this portion of the text concludes with the quotation of Acts 17:27, since this is the other NT passage from which one might derive a notion of natural theology (along with Rom 1:19).

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how in its description of the classroom in heaven at the time of creation the *Cause* presents the angels as writing the visible creation "like letters" "in their continuous variations" and spelling out, or meditating upon, the name of the Creator and organizer of all. As I stated earlier, this metaphor derives from Evagrius of Pontus's notion of *theōría phusikḗ*, or natural contemplation. The process of writing creation like letters to spell the name of God is the logical process itself, whereby we can learn about the Creator through synthesis and analysis of the created world. The author of the *Cause*, however, is not simply repeating Evagrius's thought, but rather elaborating on it by

means of the philosophical literature, particularly Aristotelian logical works and their commentary tradition, which was carried eastward at this time. The text engages in this exercise itself, when it (mis)uses the Tree of Porphyry by inverting it and treating it as an ascending hierarchy of excellence. The very fact that God can be on the Tree demonstrates that the mind has a point of access to him.

The Neoplatonists of the fifth and sixth centuries attempted to make Aristotle and Plato agree.[152] One way this was done was to make Aristotle applicable to the world below and Plato to the world above. The *Cause* does something similar: it uses Aristotle to interpret the created world in order to learn something about its *essentially* unknowable Creator. In contrast, the section in the *Cause* which describes heavenly ascent (addressed in the previous chapter, *Cause* 346.1–347.4) seems to rely less on the philosophical material deriving from the later Neoplatonists and more on an Evagrian reading of Theodore of Mopsuestia's notion of the divine image. The East Syrians believed that we can learn something about God from the created world. In contrast, Christian Neoplatonists tended to downplay the epistemological utility of this world. "For Augustine, as for Plato, the contents of this intelligible world were known by the mind independently of sense-experience."[153] Like the *Cause*, Augustine attributes knowledge to illumination. "Augustine also speaks of this divine illumination in the mind as the mind's participation in the Word of God, as God's interior presence to the mind, as Christ dwelling in the human soul and teaching it from within, and in other ways."[154] Knowledge seems to be a continous act of God for Augustine, while for the *Cause* God has given us a tool—which ultimately derives from himself, i.e., Christ the Word—in order to interpret the world. In this respect the *Cause* contains a more humanistic understanding of human beings, their relationship to the world, and their agency in learning about the world.[155] However, as we will see in a later chapter, this kind of learning seems to have been prolegomenal in the Church of the East.

## Fitting the Neoplatonic Aristotle into an Ephremic Framework (or, Is Aristotle Really That Interesting?)

In the beginning of his *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, Dimitri Gutas writes:

> For all these reasons, it is obvious that the translation movement was generated and sustained for a very long time by needs and tendencies in the nascent ʿAbbāsid society as reflected in its structure and consequent ideology; it can hardly be accounted for by the two theories that have been unreflectingly prevalent in most discussion of the subject to this day. The first claims that the translation movement was the result of the scholarly zeal of a few Syriac-speaking Christians who, fluent in Greek (because of their particular education) and Arabic

(because of their historical circumstances), decided to translate certain works out of altruistic motives for the improvement of society (or even, be it, the promotion of their own religion). The second theory, rampant in much mainstream historiography, attributes it to the wisdom and open-mindedness of a few "enlightened rulers" who, conceived in a backward projection of European enlightenment ideology, promoted learning for its own sake.[156]

While Gutas's argument may be open to some criticisms of nuance—for example, he may be too aggressively downplaying the role of Syriac Christians in the early ʿAbbāsid translation movement—his main point and what may be seen as his methodological statement is of central importance to my study: the translation movement must be understood as a response to certain synchronic cultural needs within ʿAbbāsid society. The former of the two approaches that Gutas wants to avoid assumes that a prior Syriac Christian interest in Greek literature explains the ʿAbbāsid interest in this material. The latter anachronistically projects certain modern ideas onto the ʿAbbāsid elite. The fallacy of both of these approaches is the assumption that Greek literature has some inherent value that only needs to be recognized to be appreciated: in the one case it is the Syriac Christians who do this, in the other it is "enlightened rulers."

On the contrary, in all cultural transmission the receptors of tradition must be part of an environment congenial to the assimilation of the transmitted material. The renegotiation that occurs in cultural transmission—in the case of my argument, the picking and choosing of certain ideas from the Neoplatonic version of Aristotelian logic—often reflects the intellectual background of the receptors involved as well as the ability of the received material to articulate, draw out, and play upon this background. In the past scholars rarely questioned what made a particular philosopher popular at one time or another, especially Aristotle, the philosopher par excellence, whose genius—and therefore the inherent appeal of his works—was taken for granted. However, the East Syrians did not at first absorb all of Aristotle and his commentators. Rather, certain portions of the corpus were assimilated into East-Syrian thought. Only with the eventual development of the idea of Aristotle's authority do we see the study of Aristotle for its own sake. To be sure, there are other factors affecting what is received, especially with regard to the School of Nisibis, which seems to have received the Neoplatonic Aristotle via certain conduits, as discussed above, that would have affected the transmission. I am not suggesting that the whole Aristotelian corpus along with the commentary tradition was accessible to the School and that they only took what they liked, but rather that we cannot look at what they took or received without looking at what purpose this material served.

At this point I would like to make a brief attempt at demonstrating how the *Cause* may be refitting the Neoplatonic Aristotle over an older

Syriac intellectual framework. Earlier in the chapter I suggested a more immediate dependence on the thought of Evagrius of Pontus, particularly the analogy he draws between reading and writing and his notion of natural theology or *theōría phusikḗ*. However, more than two centuries before the composition of the *Cause* and perhaps a generation before Evagrius, Ephrem of Nisibis, the fourth-century master of Syriac poetry, also emphasized that God is unknowable in his essence (again, Syr. *ītūtā*). Like the *Cause*, Ephrem mocks those who think they can inquire into the divine essence. According to Ephrem, God bridges the ontological and epistemological chasm between himself and his creation through various modes of self-revelation. Two of these, aside from scripture and the Incarnation,[157] are the various symbols he has set throughout nature and his putting on of a "garment of names." Ephrem has a whole theology of names, whereby God takes on human language so that he can be known.

> We should realize that, had He not put on the names of such things, it would not have been possible for Him to speak with us humans. By means of what belongs to us did He draw close to us:
> He clothed Himself in our language, so that He might clothe us in His mode of life. He asked for our form and put this on,
> and then, as a father with His children (*yallūdē*), He spoke with our childish state (*šabrūtan*).
> Refrain—Blessed is He who has appeared to our human race under so many metaphors.[158]

These Ephremic ideas—that God condescends to humankind through language and that he reveals himself in nature through symbols—lay the foundation for the way the *Cause* receives and employs Aristotelian logic to develop what we might understand as a kind of natural theology. While the Neoplatonists from whom the Syrians received Aristotle saw language as a necessity of our embodied state, for the Syrians, like Ephrem before them, it is a tool to solve the problem of God's radical transcendence of the world. Furthermore, the emphasis on the significance of "names" and metaphors that we find in Ephrem's writings would in time lead to speculation on the nature of language and its capacity to convey meaning.[159] Thus, a prosaic successor to these interests can be seen in the East-Syrian treatises on homonyms, shared names which would be epistemologically threatening.[160]

Ephrem lived in the fourth century, and I am not suggesting that his influence is merely a diachronic phenomenon. Rather, Ephrem and Theodore are both authors of the sixth century, inasmuch as their works were read at that time. Ephrem's works were being collected, recopied, and codified in the sixth century. His influence on Syriac liturgy, a genre that certainly reaches a large audience, was significant.[161] Beyond this, there is his obvious influence on Narsai, whose works the author of the

*Cause* probably knew. Moreover, it is important to emphasize the liturgical aspect of Ephrem's works. The combination of theological inquiry with the iterative nature of ritual, which we find in the ritualization of study at the School of Nisibis, finds its precedent in Ephrem's works.

At first philosophy was appreciated by the East Syrians as a collection of concepts and technical terms that could best express things the East Syrians already had an interest in. The *Cause* does not demonstrate how the East Syrians *received* Aristotle; rather, it is an example of how they took Aristotle and employed his ideas to express something akin to what we find earlier in their milieu, for example, in the writings of Ephrem. The text is one of the earliest attestations of the great synthesis of Greek thought into Semitic language which would occur in the coming centuries, a synthesis that would lead to the rebirth of ancient philosophy in the Islamic period.

I have tried to demonstrate in the past two chapters how the *Cause* creatively employs and even conflates Greek philosophical material with the thought of Theodore of Mopsuestia. Such a conflation is exemplified in the description the *Cause* provides of God teaching the angels to read in the classroom of Genesis 1 (*Cause* 348.4–349.13), a passage we have examined closely in this chapter and the preceding one. The natural theology the *Cause* inherited from the theology of Ephrem is the meeting point of these two different intellectual trajectories, which were combined at the School of Nisibis. Within its long list of the great teachers of the past the *Cause* predictably lingers over the figure of Theodore in a passage that draws an explicit connection between the apprehension of God through natural theology and the interpretation of scripture.

> With the strength of grace (i.e., the strength offered him by grace) he produced an interpretation of all the scriptures and a disputation against all heresies. For until that time when Grace brought this man into being and to the abode of human beings, all the portions of teaching and the interpretations and traditions of the divine scriptures—in the likeness of different species, from which is made the image of the King of Kings—were dispersed and cast everywhere in confusion and without order among all the earlier writers and fathers of the Catholic Church. After this human being had distinguished the good from the evil and was trained in all writings and traditions of the first (fathers), then like a skillful doctor, he collected into one whole all the traditions and chapters which were dispersed, and he compounded them skillfully and intelligently, and from them he mixed (like drugs) one complete aid for learning, perfect in beauties; this man who uproots and puts an end to the sickly diseases from the minds of those who approached his teaching eagerly. Because although there are diseases and pains in our body, nevertheless among all the pains there is no pain worse and more bitter to human souls than the disease of ignorance. Just as those who make a statue (Gr. *andriás*) forge each and every one of the parts of the image, and afterward fit them one after another, as the order of workmanship demands, (to make) a complete statue, thus also the blessed Theodore

composed, ordered, fit, and placed each and every one of the parts of this teaching in the order which truth demands, and forged from them in all his writings one perfect and wonderful image of that essence (*ītūtā*) rich in blessings. [162]

As stated above, Ephrem draws an analogy between the way God reveals himself in nature and the way he is revealed in scripture. Similarly, the *Cause* employs terminology characteristic of its discussion of epistemology and natural theology in this passage that treats the interpretation of scripture and the exegetical project of Theodore of Mopsuestia. The comparison to the different species which are combined to form an image of the King of Kings recalls the *Cause*'s treatment of the Parable of the Lost Coin. The process of composition/combination in Theodore's forming an image/statue is like the process that occurs when the mind contemplates creation. Again the divine essence is described as "that essence rich in blessings."[163] According to the *Cause*, Theodore brought scripture together to form an image of the divine essence in the same way as, through the use of rationality and the perception of the world, we can compose an image of God in our minds through our use of reason.

The School's intellectual heritage, as found in the *Cause*, derives from both fifth-century Edessa and the sixth-century dissemination of Greek philosophical literature in Mesopotamia. This material, that is, Theodore of Mopsuestia's theological worldview and Aristotelian logic (as well as a developed form of Antiochene theology, one that is not necessarily simply Theodoran), would have spread through the larger, more sophisticated East-Syrian schools that had begun to pop up throughout Mesopotamia by the late sixth century. From the schools these ideas may have affected even larger portions of the Church. Insofar as the ideas of such elite institutions had any effect on the common laity, it is most likely that this occurred through liturgy and homiletics. These ideas certainly crept into the monasteries, where they were met by resistance from those who deemed scholastic epistemology to be beneath them—equivalent to the gaucherie of a schoolboy's multiplication table—and scholastic group study to be child's play. In the following two chapters we will look first at the rise of the schools and then at the school movement's occasionally awkward relationship with and place within East-Syrian monasticism.

*Chapter 8*

# A Typology of the East-Syrian Schools

A damaged colophon from a copy of the Gospels dated to 599/600 provides information on what seems to be an otherwise unattested East-Syrian school at Tel Dīnawar in Bēt Nūhadrā, the region on the east bank of the Tigris running from Nineveh northward to the Habur river. The ruins of Dīnawar are 30 km northeast of Kirmanshah in modern-day Iran.[1] This colophon is strikingly similar to the Nisibene one that appears in the introduction to this book (and the arbitrary nature of its survival suggests how greatly our perspective is limited by the extant sources).

> This book of the sanctified Gospel was completed in the year 911 of the Greeks. That which by that [. . .] year ten of Khosro, king of kings, in Tel Dīnawar, which is in the land of Bēt Nūhādrā. In the teaching of . . . and the Fearers of God, the Lord, inquired (?) the presbyter and . . . divine ones. And Mār Habbībī [the reader] and . . . the presbyter elementary instructor and Mār Zĕkaryā of . . . of the school and Joseph the leader (Latin *dux*). Praise to that worshipful nature which [abided] . . . and peace be with us in his mercy, in . . . to his name forever, amen. He wrote (*sraṭ*) this book twice when . . . [remembered] all of the "stranger" (*aksenāyē*) brothers . . . May [we] be aided by their prayers, yea and amen.[2]

The similarity between this and the colophon from the introduction, as well as the early date of this text, points to the rapid spread of East-Syrian school culture and institutions in Mesopotamia. The reference to the "strangers" may suggest that this school was connected to a larger monastic complex.

By the time the School of Nisibis disappears from the sources in the early seventh century a fully fledged school movement had developed within the Church of the East. The School of Nisibis gave impetus to the rise of other East-Syrian schools dispersed widely across late antique and early Islamic Mesopotamia, and also to the social group of "schoolmen" (Syr. *eskōlayē*) who studied and often later taught in these schools. Most of the evidence for these comes from the mid- to late sixth century onward. Furthermore, the school movement was heavily integrated into the broader spectrum of East-Syrian monasticism, yet within this spectrum points of difference, and even rivalry, existed.

In this chapter I would like to lay out the evidence for the different East-Syrian schools that existed in Sasanian and early Islamic Mesopotamia. I emphasize that this is preliminary work. In the eighteenth century, J. S. Assemani laid out the evidence for a number of different schools in his *Bibliotheca Orientalis*.[3] Different East-Syrian schools receive mention in a number of studies, including Arthur Vööbus's *History of the School of Nisibis* (1965), but no past scholar has made any attempt to gather and delineate the evidence. Scholarly references to the East-Syrian schools have often taken for granted what is meant by the term "school" and tend to conflate varieties of evidence. Instead, most of the "schools" referred to in this chapter are included in the discussion only when the East Syrians employ the Syriac word *eskōlē* to refer to them. From this evidence I would like to suggest a tripartite typology into which we may fit the majority of the East-Syrian schools that begin to appear in the sources from the sixth century onward.

The source material for the various schools that were established is diverse. Aside from the numerous texts that make passing reference to these schools, the three main sources of information are the *Book of Chastity* of Īšō'dĕnaḥ of Basra, the *Book of Governors* of Thomas of Margā, and the *Chronicle of Siirt*. These texts were composed much later than the events and institutions they describe, and thus their descriptions may include anachronistic projections from later periods onto earlier ones. The earliest of these sources is Īšō'dĕnaḥ of Basra's *Book of Chastity* (*ktābā d-nakpūtā*), a long collection of over one hundred brief lives of famous monastic figures, from the mythical monastic founder, Eugenius (Mār Awgēn), to individuals from the eighth century.[4] This text was composed in the mid-ninth century, or possibly at the end of the eighth, although it has not been left untouched by later hands.[5]

The second and far more important source is Thomas of Margā's ninth-century *Book of Governors*, which, via a focused discussion of the history of Thomas's own monastery of Bēt 'Ābē, provides a broad history of monasticism within the life of the Church of the East from the sixth century to the ninth century.[6] Thomas, like Īšō'dĕnaḥ, wrote hundreds of years after many of the events which he described, and thus his work must be read critically. The third source, the *Chronicle of Siirt*, was composed probably sometime between 912 and 1020.[7] Despite its late date, the *Chronicle* is especially important because it relies in some places on sources from earlier periods.[8]

From the evidence found primarily in these three texts, we can roughly divide East-Syrian schools into three categories: independent schools, which were institutions not based in, nor wholly dependent on, a local church or monastery and which provided both elementary literacy and higher learning; monastic schools, that is, centers of learning based within

monasteries; and village schools, which can be divided into those that taught elementary lessons in reading and church service and those where a higher form of learning could also be acquired. Further discussion of these different types of schools and their relationship to one another will follow the presentation of the material. As this is a preliminary study of the East-Syrian schools, I focus predominantly on specific instances of the term "school" (Syriac, *eskōlē*). Although problems could possibly arise from such a limited approach, for now I would rather my analysis be clearly delineated, even to the point of disqualifying certain evidence, so as to avoid reading too far into the evidence and reproducing problems like the one created, for example, when Fiey refers to a "school" when his source refers only to a particular teacher.[9]

## Independent Schools

Independent schools such as the School of Nisibis seem to have been founded from the mid-sixth century onwards. Aside from the School of Nisibis, the earliest, best attested, and most influential school to function as an institution independent of any monastery or church building is the School of Seleucia, on the bank of the Tigris River in the western half of the dual city of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the capital of the Sasanian empire. This school would have received patronage from the Catholicos but also possibly from the shah himself—in those times when he was amicable toward the Church.[10]

Numerous minor references to this school exist. Fiey summarizes the evidence for the school's masters and then lists some of its more famous students.[11] He suggests that this school existed in two different locations, the former institution existing in the late fifth century, the latter from the time of Mār Abā onward. However, his evidence is based on a reference to Acacius (Catholicos 485–95/6) leaving the School of Edessa and taking on the role of teacher in Seleucia-Ctesiphon.[12] That Acacius taught there does not mean that there was a school, especially since reference to one is lacking even in this extremely late source.[13]

According to the *Chronicle of Siirt*, the School of Seleucia was founded by Mār Abā (Catholicos 540–52), after he bested a Zoroastrian in a public debate in the same location.[14] The tale that the *Chronicle* presents is a miraculous one; the lack of any earlier attestation and the use of a stereotypical conversion motif suggests it is not reliable.[15] To be sure, Abā's importance in the sixth-century school tradition is beyond doubt, as is easily demonstrated by the number of figures in the school movement associated with him by the sources.[16] Yet the bulk of this fascinating story of miraculous one-upsmanship seems to be a fictional foundation myth for the School of Seleucia. For example, however much Mār

Abā's *Life* describes him as a teacher, it nowhere mentions him founding a school.[17] That this mythic founding of the school begins with a dispute with a Zoroastrian is appropriate: theological controversy was a major impetus to the development of the school tradition. For example, an alumnus of the School of Seleucia, Titus of Ḥědattā, would be known for refuting Jacobites and Jews.[18]

Whether Mār Abā formally founded it or not, the School of Seleucia was later restored and rebuilt by the Catholicos Ezekiel (567–81), according to the *Chronicle of Siirt*.[19] It would from the late sixth century onward play a significant role in the intellectual and social life of the Church of the East, a role comparable to that of the School of Nisibis. The head of the School in the late sixth century, Īšai, composed one of the extant examples of the cause genre, and was important enough to be involved in the selection of the new Catholicos.[20]

The importance of the School and of its head is illustrated by its inclusion in the official business of the two empires of the day. The emperor Maurice (582–602) sent a certain Mārūtā, bishop of Chalcedon, as an emissary to Khosro II.[21] After watching the Catholicos Sabrīšō' (596–604) miraculously heal a young boy who had been cursed with blindness and muteness by a "Marcionite magician" while leaving the School, Mārūtā visits Khosro's palace and celebrates the Mass with him. He then visits the School, where he hears the lection and interpretation (*tafsir*) and asks for the meaning of certain passages. He rewards the "students, the weak, and the poor" with gifts and the Catholicos gives him perfumes and gifts from India and China. On his way back he is directed by Bokhtīšō', the Catholicos's "scribe" (*kātib*) and head of the School.[22]

Perhaps Mārūtā would have been particularly interested in the School, since the *Chronicle of Siirt* later describes him as a man knowledgeable in Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew, and as having composed a commentary on works of logic.[23] Certainly, if an emissary from "Rome" was brought there and if the head of the School played an important part in hosting him, the School must have been one of the centers of Christian life in the capital.

According to a source which has now been lost, in the later seventh and early eighth centuries a certain Gabriel of Qaṭar taught in the School and had among his students two future Catholicoi, Ḥĕnanīšō' (686–700) and Abā bar Bĕrīkṣebyānēh (Mār Abā II, 742–753).[24] This same Gabriel, possibly the brother of Isaac of Nineveh, was known as Gabriel the "Lion," and may have been the author of biblical commentaries.[25] As Catholicos, Mār Abā II composed philosophical works and "got into a dispute with his clergy about the management of the school at Seleucia."[26]

The School of Seleucia was closely associated with the sixth-century School of Nisibis both in its founding, if some truth is to be taken from the story of Mār Abā, and in the continual movement of personnel between

the two institutions. For example, we are told that Gregory, Metropolitan of Nisibis, after learning the psalms went to the School of Seleucia before moving on to the School of Nisibis to study under Abraham of Bēt Rabban.[27] Moreover, the collection of cause texts that have come down to us, consisting of texts from Nisibis and Seleucia, seems to have been put together in antiquity.[28]

Another independent school of the time was the so-called School of Arbela.[29] At the end of the problematic *Chronicle of Arbela* we find a passage:

> Mār Abraham the interpreter gave to Mār Ḥĕnānā Paul the Reader in order that he might establish a school for the children in the land of Adiabene in order to confirm the faith in their spirit and to protect it against the aggression of the heretics and the Messalians; and that Paul remained with us for more than 30 years fulfilling the office that was entrusted to him by the heads of the church.[30]

A student of Mār Abā, Sergius, later led the School.[31] The people of Adiabene, according to the *Chronicle of Siirt*,[32] but more specifically the inhabitants of Arbela, according to the *Book of Chastity*,[33] made Gregory of Kaškar, the future metropolitan of Nisibis (beginning c. 596), "a teacher and an interpreter" after he was educated in scripture at "the schools of the royal city of Māḥōzē" (i.e., School of Seleucia).[34] Gregory then returned to his homeland of Kaškar, where he "founded a school which brought together 300 students; he built then another school in a village in Kaškar and ordered the students to fast and devote themselves to prayer."[35] He then devoted his time to preaching among the populace, many of whom were not Christian. This is similar to Mār Abā's early career after his study at the School of Nisibis. Like the story of Mār Abā from the *Chronicle of Siirt*, in this story even Zoroastrians acknowledge Gregory's miraculous powers: during a plague the chief magi surround his school and ask him to pray for them. He does and the plague disappears.[36] Again, we see someone associated with the school movement in direct confrontation with the East Syrians' theological enemies.

Independent schools are perhaps the most difficult to draw out from the sources. The School of Kaškar is referred to several times in Fiey's discussion of this city in his *Assyrie chrétienne*.[37] Yet the "School of Kaškar" is used by Fiey both to refer to particular institutions and to speak of Kaškar as a center of learning in general. As stated above, Gregory founded a school in his home town. However, it is not clear whether we should talk of one particular school, despite the city's being a center of learning for centuries.[38] This ambiguity is similar to the problems hindering the reconstruction of the history of the "School of Edessa," as discussed in Chapter Two: the sources tend to project later institutions onto the past and scholars conflate centers of learning and schools.

Another example of this ambiguity can be seen in the so-called School

of Balad. Abimelek, who later became part of the School of Bēt Sāhdē in Nisibis, was a teacher in Balad.[39] During the time of the dissension under Ḥĕnānā, the *Chronicle of Siirt* reports, Marcus, bishop of Balad, "built a school for them (i.e., those who left Nisibis) outside the city and gathered them in it."[40] Meskēnā of Bēt ʿArbāyē, a student of Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene, taught in the "school of Balad."[41] We also read that Īšōʿyahb of Gĕdālā (later Īšōʿyahb II, 628–44 or 646),[42] after receiving his training at the School of Nisibis, left the School at the time of the schism under Ḥĕnānā and became a "teacher" in Balad.[43] Balad would later become famous as a West-Syrian center of learning, but again we might ask if the sources are referring to a particular school, such as that of Marcus, or rather to the city itself as an intellectual center where it was possible for Christian intellectuals to put a shingle out offering their learning to those who sought it. Furthermore, it is not clear if they would have done so independently, or if they associated themselves with the local ecclesiastical hierarchy and thus taught under the auspices of the Church. We have very little information for these supposedly independent schools and we know nothing about how they were maintained.

In the mid-sixth century Elias, the metropolitan of Nisibis, founded a school at a *martyrion* near the gate of the city of Nisibis. This is the so-called School of Bēt Sāhdē (i.e., *martyrion*) of Nisibis, where Abimelek the interpreter also built a monastery.[44] In contrast to the schools that were specifically founded in monasteries (see below), this school was an exception in that, according to the sources, it had a monastery founded in it, or rather in the place where it stood. Bēt Sāhdē seems to have functioned as a holy place, i.e., a *martyrion*, which developed into a place of learning and asceticism.[45] A certain "Paul the interpreter" left the School of Nisibis under Ḥĕnānā and taught there.[46] Also in the late sixth century Abraham of Behqāwād, the interpreter, studied at the School of Nisibis, then moved to Īzlā, and afterwards taught at Bēt Sāhdē, where he was eventually laid to rest after being killed by brigands.[47] Vööbus sees the founding of this school as an attempt to counter the School of Nisibis,[48] whereas Fiey says that there is not enough evidence to settle the issue one way or the other.[49] Furthermore, it is not clear what it means when the sources say that a school and a monastery were in a *martyrion*. Does this refer to the physical addition to the structure, making it a larger complex, or does it mean only that students and monks spent time there?

## Monastic Schools

The problem in addressing independent schools is that in some of the sources it is not clear whether a city had an actual school or was simply a center of learning where teachers and students would gather from afar.

A similar problem exists for the monastic schools: although they are better attested than the independent schools, it is often unclear what the sources mean when they say that there was a "school" in a monastery. For example, what are we to make of a source which refers to a "school" and "schoolmen" at the monastery of Salak?[50] Monasticism in Late Antiquity often went hand in hand with a new form of literacy, and thus monasteries often functioned as schools whether they were referred to in this way or not. One helpful distinguishing characteristic in the analysis of the East-Syrian evidence lies in determining the content of learning at these "schools." It seems that monastic schools tended to be catechetical and offered the elementary literate education required of elite men within the Church of the East. Furthermore, these schools engaged in the communal, liturgically oriented study typical of the independent schools as well as of the village schools, as the story of Mār Īšōʿyahb at Bēt ʿĀbē in the following chapter will attest.

According to the *Book of Chastity*, Bābai the Great, who came from an affluent family, at one point in his career returned to his village of Bēt ʿAynātā in Bēt Zabdai and built on his family properties "a monastery to which he added a great school."[51] In constructing this monastery, Bābai was engaging in the typical form of elite patronage discussed in Chapter Four. But again, since the sources take for granted a knowledge of this apparently common institution, that is, the monastic school, we are not told what was taught there and how the school would have been differentiated from the monastery as a whole. Furthermore, sometimes the sources conflate "school" and "monastery," so that we are told that at the time of the Catholicos Ezekiel (567–81), Daniel the Penitent, the miracle-working martyr, "built a monastery and gathered in it school students (*eskōlāyē*)."[52]

We must therefore be wary of the evidence for schools within monasteries. Take, for example, the case of the anomalous School of Mār ʿAbdā mentioned by the *Chronicle of Siirt*. While the "schools" referred to in the sources begin to appear from the mid-to later sixth century onward, the *Chronicle* places that of Mār ʿAbdā in the late fourth century.[53] The *Chronicle* tells us that Rabban Mār ʿAbdā of Dayr Qunnī (or Qōnī) was raised by local Christians in his home town, where he was educated in a "school." As a priest, "he built a great monastery and he built a school (Arab. *eskūl*) of assembling, and from all places they came to it."[54] From this school Mār ʿAbdā sent his students on to study at Edessa.[55] His students, such as ʿAbdīšōʿ, would be famous for further proselytizing in Mesopotamia, and the Catholicoi Aḥay and Yahbalāhā I (d. c. 421) came from his monastery.[56] This school, along with "many monasteries," was eventually destroyed by the Marzbān (governor) of Bēt Aramāyē by order of the shah Pērōz (459–84).[57] According to the *Chronicle*, the school became so

famous that the monastic standards it set were only changed in the sixth century when Abraham of Nethpar and Abraham of Kaškar introduced new rules and practices to the monastic life.[58]

This story would suggest an early origin for the school movement, but it is doubtful that ʿAbdā's monastery had an actual school in the later East-Syrian sense of the term. It is more likely that this is a projection into the past of later institutions.[59] There are several reasons for this. First, there is no corroborating evidence, and the one source, the *Chronicle of Siirt*, may be conflating Mār ʿAbdā with another, later monastic founder with the same name.[60] Second, the text uses stereotypical language in its reference to the school. In the line, "he built a great (Arab. *ʿaẓīm*) monastery and he built a school of assembling, and from all places they came to it,"[61] we can see earlier Syriac formulaic language. ("Assembling," *jāmiʿ*, clearly represents the Syriac noun *knūštā* from the root k-n-š, which also forms the verb commonly used for coming together or assembling.[62]) Also elsewhere in the *Chronicle of Siirt* we find an anachronistic reference for the mid-fourth century to "a great monastery and a school, and in it masters and students gathered."[63] The text uses this set phrasing to describe the episode when Gregory of Kaškar, Metropolitan of Nisibis, founded a "great (*kabīr*)" monastery at Bazzā de-Nahrawātā (Bizz al-Anhār), and "he assembled (*ijtamaʿa*) school students to it from everywhere."[64] This standard phrase shows how integrated the school and the monastery could be, but probably does not realistically represent an institution founded in the fourth century.

The monastery of Dayr Qunnī was perhaps influential in the fifth century, but it is likely that the *Chronicle*'s description of it in this period depends on the later reputation of this institution. Dayr Qunnī became a significant intellectual and monastic center in the Islamic period, and we hear later of the "School of Mār Mārī," named after the legendary evangelizer of the region.[65] Thus it seems that under the influence of the later fame of the monastery as a center of learning, the *Chronicle* projects an anachronistic institution into an earlier period.

This standard conflation of monastery and school is found in much of the source material. The *Book of Chastity* states that Īšōʿzĕkā "built three monasteries and added to them schools."[66] As we will see in the next chapter, these additions were not without controversy. After being trained in scripture, Īšōʿzĕkā then built a monastery in Bēt ʿArbāyē and "established in that monastery teachers and schoolmen (*eskōlāyē*)." In Adiabene he built the monastery, later known as "The Monastery of Gaṣṣā of Īšōʿzĕkā," and placed "teachers and schoolmen" in it.[67]

The School of Ḥīrtā, according to the *Chronicle of Siirt*, was founded by Cyrus of Edessa, one of the disciples of Mār Abā and the author of a number of extant examples of the cause genre.[68] The *Chronicle* also refers

to this school as a monastery and states that it was built over Mār Abā's grave.[69] Ḥīrtā was already a center of learning: the father of Sergius, another of Mār Abā's students, was "Sāhīq, the teacher of Ḥīrtā."[70] At a nearby site, the archeological remains have been found of what may have been the study notes of a pilgrim to the area from this period.[71] We also read that Barṣaumā, an interpreter from Ḥīrtā, was made the metropolitan of Nisibis by Īšōʿyahb II (628–45),[72] and that Elijah, the founder of the influential Upper Monastery in Mosul, studied there.[73] This school in Ḥīrtā—or simply Ḥīrtā as a center of Christian learning—may have existed up to the eleventh century.[74]

## Village Schools

Thomas of Margā provides the majority of the evidence for village schools, that is, small schools associated neither with large ecclesiastical centers nor with monasteries. However, at least some of these schools were attached to the local church.[75] We may assume that similar small institutions existed from early on; however, these would have been more informal, while village schools, as we know them from the sources, seem to have been a later development. The learning at some of these schools could be quite advanced, but the standard lesson seems to have been basic literacy and an introduction to the liturgy. In the late seventh century, Thomas of Margā tells us, John of Daylam was placed in a "school" and "learned in a short time the psalms and the other subjects which it is the duty of boys to learn."[76] In the early seventh century, before his life as a solitary and then as a master with disciples, Rabban Sergius "was instructed in doctrine in various schools, but more especially in the school of Bēt Rāstāk, a village in the country of Margā," where he studied under the "exegete" Rabban Qāmīšōʿ (whom we will see in the following chapter as an adversary of Īšōʿyahb III regarding the building of a school at Bēt ʿĀbē).[77] The presence of an "exegete" (*mphašqānā*) at a village school suggests that Sergius was acquiring more than basic literacy.

Aside from liturgical training and basic literacy, these schools could introduce the students to the exegesis of scripture, but this was probably only insofar as a certain biblical hermeneutics is implicit in the lectionary cycle itself. The latter portion of book III of the *Book of Governors* is devoted to the life of Māranʿammēh, the metropolitan of Sĕlāk, who as a "teacher" travels around converting people by his miracles. At one point Māranʿammēh visits a village school:

> And the blessed Māranʿammēh came to the village of these men. Now there was in it a small school, and twelve *school students* and their teacher, and he went into it when the teacher was making ready to have a passage read from the Bible (*l-maqrāyū ṣḥāḥā*), and the passage was from Isaiah. And the blessed man asked

him what passage he was going to read, and [when he had told him] Mār Māran-ʿammēh said, "Leave this passage today, and begin from where I will show you." And he opened (*ṗṣal*) the Book and showed him [the passage].[78]

Here, the terms "school students" (Syr. *eskōlāyē*) seems to refer to "students" of a lower rank than, for example, those at the School of Nisibis. The passage Māranʿammēh reads is one from Isaiah which predicts death and destruction, and he uses it to warn the inhabitants of the village of the coming ruin of their town.[79] This anecdote points to the exegetical practice, however small-scale, of the village school.

Training in a village school could lead to a future career involving even more learned, bookish activities. The story of two brothers who lived in the eighth century begins with the village school and ends with lives devoted to monasticism and scribal practice.[80]

And it came to pass that the blessed Mār Aḥā and another brother called Šubḥālĕmāran were left orphans, for their father died when they were little children. The believing woman their mother brought them up until they arrived at the years of discretion; and they went forth from their village and came with their mother to Šalmat, a village of Saphsāphā, and entered the school there. And they were maintained [there] by the labour and care of the venerable woman their mother, who is worthy of remembrance for good, and they studied divine doctrine.[81]

The boys later enter a monastery and eventually, when they have their own cells, bring their mother to live with them out of both love for her and the gratitude they feel for the care she showed in having them educated. Hidden away in their monastic retreat, the brothers maintain scribal professions: "Now while Rabban Mār Aḥā wrote books (*ktābē kāteb*), his brother Šubḥālĕmāran was a book-binder (*mdabqānā*)."[82]

An important figure with regard to these small schools, at least according to Thomas's presentation of the material, is Bābai of Gĕbīltā (near modern Tikrit), whose life and work requires closer examination, since it was pivotal to the spread of East-Syrian village schools. The *Book of Governors* provides most of what we know about this "holy teacher" of the early to mid-eighth century.[83] Thomas describes Bābai as a school reformer: "All the rules and arrangements of the schools which through laxity and neglect had been destroyed, were restored by him, and through him [the schools] regained their former glory."[84] According to Thomas, prior to Bābai, all the various church hymns, melodies, and songs had been confused. He brought the many traditions together and imposed an order on them.[85] He also became a teacher to many disciples and founded numerous schools.[86] Thomas provides a long list of the various schools that Bābai built or rebuilt. While some of these were in monasteries, most were not.[87]

The two main endeavors of Bābai's career, (re)forming East-Syrian schools and reforming East-Syrian church music, should not be understood as distinct from one another.[88] As we saw for the School of Nisibis in Chapter Four, study at the East-Syrian schools was liturgically oriented. Appropriately, when Thomas describes Bābai's death and burial, he explicitly compares him to Narsai, the first head of the School of Nisibis, and Cyrus of Edessa, mentioned above, who authored several extant instances of the cause genre and who was the student of Mār Abā. Thomas also compares Bābai to a John and an Abraham, who were, judging from the context, John of Bēt Rabban and Abraham of Bēt Rabban, two leaders of the School of Nisibis after Narsai's death.[89] If this is the case, then all the figures Thomas decides to name as comparable to Bābai are associated with the East-Syrian schools. This is even more striking because Thomas does not regularly refer to such figures, in contrast to his regular invocation of the Egyptian desert fathers.

Bābai's work was necessary in part because of the great complexity of the East-Syrian liturgical tradition. An awareness of the formal training required in order to master these many disparate texts is demonstrated in the story of Māranzĕkā, Bishop of Ḥĕdattā, and his meeting with a mysterious Arabic-speaking shepherd whom he found singing the Easter service in the wilderness. Māranzĕkā "wondered how this pasturer of camels was able to sing this hymn which was so difficult that not every man was capable of singing it, and where he had learned it."[90] The shepherd pretends to be an Arab, but Māranzĕkā refuses to believe this, since few have the ability to learn and sing this hymn. The man explains that he had been a bishop but was taken hostage by Arabs and forced to be their shepherd. Over the years he had gained respect among the tribe to which he was enslaved, and since he was generally left alone, he remained in this life of desert solitude.[91]

Bābai would have a lasting influence on learning in the Church of the East through his writings, but also through his many students, who would later be found as instructors at other schools, including the smaller, village ones.[92] Some of Bābai's spiritual progeny also became intellectuals of great distinction. Abraham bar Dāšandād, "the Lame,"[93] was head exegete at the village school of Bāšōš in Saphsāphā.[94] Crippled from birth, Abraham, whose floruit was in the early eighth century, was brought as a child to Bābai of Gĕbīltā by his mother. The saint foretold the child's future greatness as a teacher.[95] Abraham's works as described by ʿAbdīšōʿ are a book of exhortation, a commentary (*puššāqā*) on Mark the Monk, a disputation (*drāšā*) against the Jews, a book on the "path of the king," *mēmrē* on penitence, and various letters.[96] Perhaps more significantly, Abraham taught two important intellectual figures of the late eighth and early ninth centuries: Īšōʿ bar Nūn and Abū Nūḥ al-Anbārī. The future

Catholicos Timothy I studied at the same institution at about this time.[97] Īšōʿ bar Nūn is a significant figure in the transmission of East-Syrian exegesis,[98] while Timothy I and Abū Nūḥ would be commissioned by the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mahdī (d. 785) to translate Aristotle's *Topics* into Arabic.[99]

Bābai's influence is attested by the closing structure of the *Book of Governors*: the two lives of holy men with which the text ends include interludes at schools founded by Bābai.[100] It is unfortunate that our sources take for granted the details of the East-Syrian village-school education and leave us guessing about the content and format of learning. However, it is significant that these two lives begin with training in the village school but move on to the protagonists' retreat to the monastery. This important shift is treated in the following chapter, which addresses the relationship between the East-Syrian school and the monastery.

## Some Conclusions About East-Syrian Schools

The more detailed evidence from the School of Nisibis examined in Chapter Four may be taken, if this institution was in any way representative of the whole, as a textured sketch of the workings of the larger, more developed East-Syrian schools. In this chapter I have provided a quantitative outline of the East-Syrian school movement from the sixth century onward by looking at the numerous references to other East-Syrian schools. The more vivid and detailed evidence from the School of Nisibis itself offers a rich perspective on the lived experience of this center of learning and on how Christian men associated with one another in this hierarchical institution that was in many ways similar to a monastery. The quantitative evidence of this chapter suggests that East-Syrian schools in general can be divided into three categories: independent schools, monastic schools, and village schools. However, to a certain extent this categorization is only heuristic, since it is in fact often difficult to distinguish between the different types of institutions attested by the sources. For example, it is uncertain, when a school is referred to as part of a monastery, how distinct it would have been from the rest of the monastery (i.e., was it a specific place, a room, or merely an activity?). Similarly, the village school may have been a separate building, or it could have simply been a wing, or a section, of the local church. Schools were perhaps founded "in the courtyards (*dāray*) of the Church" and not necessarily housed in a distinct structure.[101]

Robert Kaster has shown that the role of the grammarian in the classical system of education was more fluid than scholars, relying on idealized treatises on education, had previously speculated. For example, the grammarian's work would often stray into the rhetor's curriculum, which

would have been the next rung on the ladder of learning.[102] Similarly, it seems that some of the East-Syrian schools, even the smaller, less attested village schools, developed into centers for a learning more sophisticated than the mere acquisition of literacy, elementary church doctrine, and a foundational knowledge in liturgy. Centers of learning were often more fluid than not, evolving into institutions simultaneously offering both elementary and higher learning.

Perhaps the most significant development within the school movement was that schools became *places* of learning, which were not necessarily centered around charismatic individuals or well-known teachers. This is comparable to the development of the Babylonian Rabbinic *yeshivot*, which evolved from study circles around individual masters into distinct institutions that could persist long after their founders' deaths.[103] This is most apparent in the larger East-Syrian schools, where the very existence of a succession of head exegetes suggests an intergenerational continuity. However, it can also be seen in the smaller village schools that are named after their locale as opposed to a particular teacher in that locale.

To be sure, despite the existence of the East-Syrian school as a distinct institution, its origins and its continuing existence are clearly intertwined with the history of monasticism in the East. The foundation of the School of Nisibis was modeled on that of a monastery, and the School of Nisibis may have been instrumental in the dispersal of schools throughout Mesopotamia. The personnel of school and monastery were constantly interacting and many figures moved back and forth between the two. The monastery itself at times had its own school. However, the monastic school is the less striking aspect of the developments in the East-Syrian school movement, since the monastery was an institution that had already developed and spread throughout the Mediterranean basin and far into the insular culture of the north.

The East-Syrian independent schools were institutions of learning in northern Mesopotamia in the late antique and early Islamic periods that were distinct from the monastery and that functioned as centers of both elementary and higher learning. These were a novelty. The formalization of the transmission of knowledge in semi-autonomous social institutions with an explicit ideology of learning is characteristic of the project of education in modernity. It is only at certain times and places in the premodern world that schools as ideologically and practically distinct institutions develop in a manner at all like that of modernity. For example, later in the Middle Ages the "schools" of the Latin West would become prominent centers of learning, while the *madrasa* in the Islamic sphere was an endowed space designed specifically for a certain kind of learning.

Despite its being part of the larger monastic movement, as I will argue in the following chapter, the East-Syrian school movement may also be

appreciated as an early example of the type of center of learning which would arise among other religious communities in the Middle Ages. One may speculate that its social autonomy is related to the theologically exclusionary tendency of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. The open porticos of the classical world fit with a more open, public learning style, a miscegenated divine realm, and a context where another school (i.e., *haíresis*), although worthy of debate, was not demonic and threatening. In contrast, Jews, Muslims, and Christians developed institutions of learning where their socio-theological differences could be articulated. And yet they continued to create spaces of engagement, for example, the realm of *kalām*, Islamic speculative philosophy, where members of each of the three religious communities parried and lunged within the arena of rationality.

*Chapter 9*

# The Monastic Context of the East-Syrian School Movement

If the East-Syrian schools are to be examined accurately they must be placed within the larger context of East-Syrian monasticism. The relationship between school and monastery in the Church of the East was complex and could at times lead to tension. The East-Syrian schools played a particular role in the typical socialization process of East-Syrian religious elites. However, at times the balanced and idealized correct relationship between these two institutions could break down.

Chapter Four of this book began with an irenic and witty letter from Īšōʿyahb III (died 659) to Hormizd, his cellmate from his student days at the School of Nisibis, written while Īšōʿyahb was bishop of Mosul. This chapter begins with a story about him when he was Īšōʿyahb III, the Catholicos of the Church of the East. This story is preserved in the *Book of Governors*, Thomas of Margā's chronicle of East-Syrian monasticism composed in the mid-ninth century. Thomas describes a dispute that occurred between the members of the monastery of Bēt ʿĀbē and Īšōʿyahb, who had been a disciple of the founder of Bēt ʿĀbē, Mār Jacob, before going on to study at the School of Nisibis. Īšōʿyahb, after paying for renovations at the monastery,

> wanted to build a school (Syr. *eskōlē*) in the place of his cell, to furnish it with everything that was necessary, and to bring to it teachers, interpreters (Syr. *bādōqē*), and exegetes, to gather many "school students" (Syr. *eskōlāyē*),[1] and to attend to everything for them. He arranged his plans and he decided and determined to make this thing, so that a monastery of instruction (Syr. *ʿumrā l-tulmādā*) might be accessible to every "school student," trained and illuminated in the scripture, that the school and monastery might become one, the former might give birth to and rear [them], the monastery might make them disciples and sanctify them for the labors of asceticism.[2]

It is possible that the recent Arab conquest of Seleucia-Ctesophon (637) served as an impetus for Īšōʿyahb's project. Perhaps this account means that he was moving part of the School of Seleucia to Bēt ʿĀbē, a monastic center in a location easier to protect than the prior Sasanian capital.

A group of monks, including the head of the monastery, Qāmīšō', were worried that the Catholicos's project would compromise the peace and quiet of their monastic retreat.[3] They gathered before him and begged him to desist from this project:

> This work is not one that belongs to ascetics (Syr. *'anwāyē*, lit. "the poor," "the afflicted"), we who sit in our cells. The songs of the hallelujahs, the psalms, the responses, the harmonies of the youths and the vigilant (*šahhārē*)[4] will vex us. For we did not find it in a book nor did we receive from report (the tradition) that this thing (i.e., a school) was in one of the monasteries of the fathers. Rather, we ourselves are summoned to weeping and mourning while sitting in our cells (lit. in the sitting in our cells), according to the teaching which is from scripture and which we have also received from our father Mār Jacob. For he did not order us in his life and in his migration from us that one should teach the other chanting or how to read a manuscript.[5] Leave off making us "school students" again, rather, (let us be) while we sit in our cells (lit. in the sitting in the cells) and (there may be) the solitary reading (of scripture) of each person by himself.[6]

The monks then threatened to leave the monastery unless Īšō'yahb built his "school" someplace else.

> If, however, thou wishest to build a school, behold all the towns, and villages and the lands round about them; the whole land of Persia is thy dominion, build then wheresoever thou wishest; but in this monastery a school shall not be built, for if thou dost build a school here, we shall all depart.[7]

Thomas's account is finely crafted and well expresses the particular ecclesiastical and social tensions that would have existed in such an affair. The monks' statement that they do not want to be "school students" points to the close interaction between the East-Syrian schools and the monasteries. As was shown in the previous chapter, many future monks would receive their primary learning in an East-Syrian school but then move on to the monastery. However, from Thomas's description of Īšō'yahb's intentions it is clear that his plans were for something more sophisticated than a mere primary school. Thus the monks' statement should be taken not only as a literal statement (i.e., that they do not want numerous young boys hanging around making noise), but as a derogatory attack on an institution they felt was below them.

The Catholicos responds to the monks by applying the Greek philosophical distinction between the contemplative and the active life to the private meditation and group study that composed the routine at a monastery with a school, in philosophical terms the one being "theoretical," the other "practical." He then mentions how his past endowments to the monastery as well as his spiritual authority within the church make it "my own monastery."[8] However, the Catholicos finally abandons his plan when the monks do in fact begin to leave. "And he departed to Kuphlānā his

village, and he built there the school which he had prepared to build in this monastery; and those blessed men turned and came back to their cells."[9]

The monks' complaints, as depicted by Thomas, reflect an intimate knowledge of the curriculum of the East-Syrian school, and the matter-of-fact way in which this information is expressed suggests that it was common knowledge. Thomas has placed in the mouths of the monks a subtle pun reflecting their disdain for the Catholicos's plans. The monks' description of legitimate monastic labor as something done "while sitting in our cells," or more literally "in the sitting in our cells," seems to rely on a similar expression used in monastic literature (*mawtbā da-b-qelāytā*).[10] However, there is also a double meaning in this usage, since the Syriac term, *mawtbā*, means a number of things associated with the East-Syrian schools, including "academic session." In using it the monks say that their "academic session" is private and in their cells, not a group activity. The social character of the school threatens the monks' privacy, and concomitant with the school's emphasis on the collective and the social is its liturgical focus. As the monks themselves note, the study of the school was liturgically oriented, with a focus on the correct reading of scripture. The reference to "how to read a manuscript" calls to mind the same idiom from the "Life of Narsai," when Narsai demonstrates his natural scholastic aptitude by miraculously reading manuscripts with facility even as a youth.[11]

On its surface this story relates a conflict between "monk" and "school student," but stepping back from this material and placing it within a larger monastic context provides a more nuanced perspective, one that views this conflict as rising out of a tension between two different understandings of the monastic life: one more eremitic, the other school-oriented and cenobitic. For although the School of Nisibis was the major intellectual center of the Church of the East in the sixth and early seventh centuries and an institution of learning unprecedented in antiquity, it, as well as the East-Syrian school movement as a whole, fits within the broader spectrum of East-Syrian monasticism. Monastery and school were not wholly different and distinct institutions. Rather, the differences between the School of Nisibis and East-Syrian monasteries, especially those affected by what has been termed East-Syrian "reform" monasticism from the mid-sixth century onward, derive from the degree of emphasis that each of these institutions put on the importance of social interaction. These two types of institution also differed in their intellectual positions, especially in their notions of epistemology and their understanding of the accessibility of the divine. For many East Syrians a straight and unhindered path ran from school to monastery and finally to desert solitude, and school teachers fully endorsed this progression

and a solitary monasticism as its pinnacle. For example, Abraham bar Dāšandād, the famous teacher at the School of Bāšōš in Saphsāphā whose students included important East-Syrian intellectuals, wrote on monastic matters. His extant letter exhorts a friend who is giving up the cenobitic life for one of solitude to spurn the world, to pray and read in private.[12]

Social tension and intellectual difference could exist between those who devoted themselves to a more solitary monastic lifestyle and those who remained within the school as teachers in its hierarchy of offices. Beyond this, a homologous relationship existed between the intellectual and social life that each of these institutions, the monastery and the school, advocated. Thus, it is not a coincidence that an institution advocating group study put more emphasis on the notion that the divine was completely inaccessible without instruments such as language and pedagogy, while an institution that promoted private meditation allowed for the divine to enter into the consciousness of the pure without mediation.

If the life of the "schoolman" (*eskōlāyā*) may be understood as a form of monasticism more broadly defined—especially since schools, like monasteries, were "intentional communities" with rules and a hierarchy similar to those of a monastery—then we may look at the practices of the school as being parallel to the practices of the monastery. In this way, group study at the school, as I have already suggested, would have served as a devotional practice that bore as much religious significance as prayer and private reading did in institutions focused more on private inspiration, such as those East-Syrian monasteries where monks focused on the higher levels of contemplation as advocated in the writings of Evagrius of Pontus.

## The Disappearance of Proto-Monasticism and the "Egyptianization" of Syriac Monastic Culture

In her 1994 book, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Susanna Elm delineates the transformation through the fourth century of an indigenous monastic tradition into the "classical" monastic forms typical of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages in two separate milieus, Asia Minor and Egypt.[13] Elm's book is part of a larger movement in more recent scholarship to show how the various forms of Christian asceticism practiced around the Mediterranean were coopted by bishops and Christian elites in their bid for power in late antique society.[14] Despite the difference in quality of the source material (especially in comparison to Egypt), an analysis similar to Elm's study of Asia Minor and Egypt could be done for the Syriac milieu, where we find a similar shift from one monastic form to another.

Analysis of the indigenous Syriac ascetic tradition is complicated by questions concerning the very origins of Christianity in the East. Scholars

have long noted that from early on, perhaps from the very beginning, a strong ascetic tendency existed in the Christianity of the Syriac milieu. For example, it remains to be settled whether the writings of Aphrahat, our earliest substantial source for Christianity in the Sasanian Empire (his *Demonstrations* date from 337–45), reflect a community where celibacy is a prebaptismal requirement.[15] In conjunction with the occlusion of older forms by later developments, the sources for the Syriac milieu are further confused by the continual importation of monastic ideas and practices from the West.

The influx of Western monasticism, and more specifically of Western monastic texts, effected a rewriting of monastic history, thus obscurring the origins of Syriac Christianity and early Syriac monasticism. This process belongs to a broader erasure of the Syriac past. In the first chapter of his influential *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Walter Bauer examines early Christianity in Edessa and posits that the heterodoxy that existed there was later covered up by the imposition of Orthodoxy in the fifth century.[16] More recent work has furthered the understanding of this process,[17] and much of the scholarly project of the late H. J. W. Drijvers was dedicated to shedding light on pre-Nicene developments in Syriac Christianity.[18] Key figures in the early history of Christianity in the region, such as Bardaiṣan (c. 154–222) and Tatian (later second century), were later either repudiated or forgotten, just as proto-monastic forms disappeared or were thoroughly transformed.[19] In fact, from the later fourth century, with the works of Ephrem, into the fifth century, with both the rewriting of the history of early Christianity in Edessa and contemporaneous monastic developments and reforms, we see the creation of a fictive "Orthodox" history and pedigree in Edessa.[20] Contemporaneously, in the fifth century urban ascetics were made subject to the rule of the bishop, while others were removed from urban space.[21] This late importation of "orthodoxy" into the Syriac church is attested for the Sasanian realm by the extremely late reception of the canons of the Council of Nicaea (325) by a council held in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 and by the further uncritical adoption of Western church canons in 420.[22]

As discussed in Chapter Six, the translation of Greek patristic texts into Syriac began in the fourth century. Some of this patristic material was monastic (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, etc.). However, along with this material, we also see from the fifth century onward the translation into Syriac of Egyptian monastic literature composed in Greek or translated from Coptic into Greek. This literature would have an immense impact both on Syriac monastic literature and on monastic practice among Syriac-speaking Christians. Although there were various routes by which these texts would have reached the East, the many references to Syriac monks visiting Egypt at this time would suggest that some of it

was brought directly from Egypt. In fact, by the ninth century a number of West-Syrian monks settled in Egypt in what is now referred to as the Monastery of the Syrians (Dayr al-Surian) in Wadi al-Natrun.[23]

The most famous piece of monastic literature to make this journey eastward was the *Life of Antony*, which, as attested in other literary corpora, had a quick dissemination throughout the Mediterranean basin.[24] Appropriately—considering its great popularity and wide dissemination soon after its composition—this text seems to be the first of many Egyptian monastic texts to exert an influence in the Syriac milieu.[25] Like early Syriac translations in general, the Syriac version of the life of this quintessential ascetic holy man is loose and expansive, with lines added throughout. The more sophisticated or subtle the Greek of the original, the looser the translation often becomes and the more it reflects indigenous monastic ideas.[26]

The letters of St. Antony also found their way into many languages. The oldest manuscript of the Syriac version is dated to 534. This manuscript, British Library Add. 12175, also contains writings of Evagrius of Pontus, Mark the Monk, Pseudo-Macarius the Great, and the monastic writer Ammonius.[27] From as early as the fifth century there are translations of Abba Isaiah (fifth or sixth century; of Gaza or Scetis),[28] Nilus of Ancyra (or Nilus the Solitary, as he was known in Syriac; d. c. 430),[29] the *Historia Monachorum* (probably fifth century),[30] and Palladius's *Lausiac History* (probably fifth century).[31] There is also the complex tradition of the "Sayings of the Desert Fathers," arranged both alphabetically and according to topic, from c. 500 onward. In addition to these there are translations of works by the Egyptian fathers such as Serapion, Shenute, and Bishoi. Much of this material is still in manuscript and some of these manuscripts are quite early (sixth and seventh centuries).[32] These texts continued to be translated and retranslated into the Islamic period. Much of this tradition culminates in the work of ʿĔnanišōʿ who, at the request of the Catholicos George (658–680), compiled a new redaction of several Egyptian monastic texts, along with many further additions, in one volume, *The Paradise of the Fathers*.[33] This text was a collection of much of the material that had been translated over the preceding years.

Later East-Syrian monastic works demonstrate the end result of this continuous appropriation of Egyptian and Egypt-associated material. For example, this influx of monastic literature from Egypt led to a transformation of Syriac monastic historiography. The "egyptianization" of the monastic movement is fully apparent in Thomas of Margā's *Book of Governors*: not only do the Egyptian fathers serve as models, but according to the text the origins of monasticism go back to Egypt.[34] The history of Syrian monasticism was literally rewritten in various texts from this time onward. Since connections to Egypt gave monastic practices and literature

a new kind of authority, if something was not Egyptian a false Egyptian pedigree would be invented for it. The writings of John of Apamea (also known as John the Solitary), the Syrian monastic writer from the early fifth century, played a major role in the Syriac monastic tradition.[35] However, because of the paucity of biographical evidence he was simply conflated with John of Lycopolis and John of Thebes, two monastic figures from Egypt.[36]

Another instance of this renaming of indigenous Syrian monastic literature is provided by the pseudo-Macarian literature. This monastic literature, often associated with Messalianism and clearly evidencing a bilingual Greek-Syriac background, was renamed due to the great controversy it aroused. Thus a corpus composed in Greek in a Syriac milieu was eventually renamed and then translated into Syriac as a purported Egyptian collection.[37] There are other examples of these false historiographic ties to Egypt. For example, the *Life of Ephrem* tradition has the saint visit holy men in Egypt.[38] This is not surprising, since at the time that this tradition was coming together Syriac Christians *were* in fact visiting holy men in Egypt.

Eventually, the memories of early Syriac monasticism and its indigenous origins were completely erased. The culmination of this may be seen in the Mār Awgēn tradition, which held that monasticism was brought to Mesopotamia by Eugenius the Egyptian. For example, the eighth- or ninth-century *Book of Chastity* begins its history of East-Syrian monasticism with a description of Eugenius's life.[39] (Fiey has shown that this is a much later tradition.[40]) Moreover, as stories changed, so did monastic practices. By the later fourth century the ascetic "superheroes" who would make Syrian asceticism famous started to appear.[41] By the fifth century we see the formal reorganization of urban monasticism with the reforms instituted by Rabbula (d. 435) in Edessa, thus maintaining yet transforming the practice of sanctified laity that we find in the earlier tradition (e.g., Aphrahat).[42] The sixth century saw the rise of "reform" monasticism, which will be discussed below.

## Evagrius of Pontus

Of the numerous monastic works to be translated into Syriac at this time, some laid a groundwork for the development of a wholly different theorization of the monastic life. The strongest impact in this area was made by the writings of Evagrius of Pontus (345–399), which would play a major role in the monastic spirituality of the Church of the East from the sixth century onward.[43] In fact, our contemporary reconstruction of Evagrius's thought depends in part upon the Syriac material, because his works were condemned in the anti-Origenist Fifth Ecumenical Council

of 553, which did not have jurisdiction over the Church of the East and therefore could not restrict the transmission of his writings in the East.[44] The translations of his works were produced primarily during the fifth century and would have an immense impact on Syriac ascetic vocabulary for centuries.[45] These works tend to be short collections of "chapters" and "sayings." They are handbooks for ascetics, designed to guide them in contemplation and ascetic practice. The genre of these works fits with their content: Evagrius employs what one might call an "ascetic aesthetics."

When put into a coherent system Evagrius's thought is a complex combination of Origenist speculation and prescriptions for monastic practice.[46] Put briefly, he maintains a monistic system in which the world as we know it derives from an original fall of intelligent souls away from the divine unity and into a bodily state. The purpose of ascetic practice is to reach a contemplative state that reunites the fallen soul with God. Such a system laid the groundwork for an epistemology and monastic practice at odds with the understanding of learning and the social life that we find in school-related texts such as the *Cause.*

Central to Evagrius's thought is the notion that rational creatures can engage in their natural function of contemplation in order to work their way back to their previous state of intellectual union with the Creator. Evagrius's idea of contemplation, or *theōría,* derives from a long philosophical tradition, as does his notion of *apátheia.* The ubiquity of the term *theōría* in certain Syriac writers stems from Evagrius's influence; however, it was also used with a different meaning as a key technical term in Antiochene exegesis.[47] It seems that in later East-Syrian monastic writers the earlier Antiochene *theōría* is occasionally mapped onto the Evagrian usage.[48]

As Columba Stewart notes, Evagrius advocates prayer unencumbered by mental images, even though "Evagrius follows Aristotle in seeing the mind as creating an inner world of conceptual depictions relating to the things external to the self."[49] According to Evagrius, "Prayer is a communion of the mind with God," a communion which is "without intermediary."[50] An image would constitute such an intermediary. One of the signs of *apátheia,* which is among the first requirements of contemplation, is that memories and dream images cease to arise during prayer. "The mind (*noûs*) possesses vigour when it imagines nothing of the things of this world during the time of prayer."[51] "Make no attempt at all to receive a figure or form or colour during the time of prayer."[52]

This anti-imagism is directly connected to Evagrius's emphasis on silence, since language, both in the mind and spoken, and bodies are understood to be similar entities in Greek philosophical thought, inasmuch as both are means of conveyance, one of meaning and the other of the soul. Corresponding to this analogy is the mutual failure of words

and images to express accurately realms inaccessible to immediate human contact. Just as images are insufficient for conveying the spiritual realm, so language can not touch upon the divine. A passage from Evagrius's *Gnosticus* reads:

> Every proposition has a *genus*, which is predicated, or a difference, or a *species*, or a property, or an accident or what is compounded of these: but nothing which is said in regard to the Holy Trinity is acceptable. Let the ineffable be worshipped in silence.[53]

This passage contrasts sharply with the perspective of the *Cause* regarding language and logic. In contrast to Evagrius's anti-imagism, the *Cause* combines an Antiochene notion of the "image" with a Neoplatonic Aristotelian psychology to describe how we create an image of God in our minds by means of logic, although this image can never represent the divine essence itself.[54] The interest in images and mentally created pictures—even statues—of God that we find in the *Cause* stands in sharp contrast to the focus on wordless and imageless prayer in Evagrius's *Chapters on Prayer*.[55]

For Evagrius, the earlier stages of contemplation are part of *theōría phusikḗ*, which is the contemplation of the world around us via both scripture and the physical universe. The goal is to grasp the underlying principles or *lógoi* of visible creation. From this the ascetic may, like the angels, enjoy contemplation of the intelligible realm. This idea of learning about the above from that which is below coincides with notions the East Syrians derived from Ephrem as well as from Theodore of Mopsuestia. It is apparent in the *Cause*'s natural theology, deriving ultimately from a combination of patristic and Neoplatonic sources, discussed in Chapter Seven. However, implicit in the similarity between what we find in the *Cause* and the Evagrian notion of *theōría physikḗ* is a subordination of natural theology and its constituent parts to a doctrine that transcends it. For *theōría phusikḗ* is only the first stage in Evagrius's system.

The next stage of contemplation, one aimed at the Holy Trinity itself, is characterized by simplicity and a state of peace. This form of contemplation imparts an unmediated knowledge of the divine essence itself; it is granted only by God's grace and is never continuous. That such knowledge would be accessible at all directly contradicts notions we find in the *Cause* and the writings of Ephrem, where it is stated that God cannot be known in his essence. Furthermore, the emphasis on the necessity of the *Organon* of logic that we find in the *Cause* and in the Neoplatonic commentary tradition on Aristotle is rejected, as for example in the quotation from the *Gnosticus* above. For Evagrius prayer is a means of contemplation, and in it the spiritual is intertwined with the practical and embodied nature of the human being.

Although earlier translations of Evagrius probably derive from West-Syrian circles, he became the ascetic master par excellence in the East.[56] The commentary on his *Kephalaia Gnostica* of Bābai the Great—the dominant intellectual of the Church of the East in the early seventh century and virtual leader of the church during its acephalous period—attests to Evagrius's importance in the Church of the East. This text will be discussed below.

Related to the importation of Evagrian thought into Syriac is the production of the Syriac translation of the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite. The Pseudo-Dionysian corpus was composed by an unknown Syrian author in the late fifth or early sixth century CE.[57] These texts, which were heavily influenced by later Neoplatonism, particularly that of Proclus,[58] immediately became popular in Miaphysite circles and were translated into Syriac by the famous West-Syrian translator of Greek philosophical works, Sergius of Rēšʿaynā, who also composed a long introduction to them.[59] István Perczel has argued that the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus must be restored to the Origenist movements of the fifth century.[60] Furthermore, these works must be understood as an instance of the development of Evagrian thought.[61] In the development of this corpus we can see the ongoing influence of Evagrius within Syrian ascetic writing; its translation into Syriac served as another conduit of this kind of thought.

The Pseudo-Dionysian corpus did not exert much influence on East-Syrian monastic writing in the early centuries. It began to be used by monastic writers only in the later seventh century, some of whom will be addressed below. This is possibly because, unlike the philosophers whom both East and West Syrians read, Pseudo-Dionysius had been taken up early on by the West Syrians to support their cause, and thus perhaps was marked as a West-Syrian author.[62] However, the career of Stephen bar Sudaili, who was the true author of a work attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius's supposed teacher, Hierotheos, and who was condemned by his fellow West Syrians for promoting heterodox notions typical of the Origenism of Late Antiquity, points to the coming controversies in the East surrounding Evagrian thought.[63] Stephen is accused by Philoxenus of ascribing to himself "revelations and visions" and saying "that to him (i.e., Stephen) alone is it given to understand the Scriptures correctly."[64] This corresponds with an Evagrianism that goes beyond reason and language, elevating personal experience as the arbiter of true knowledge.[65]

## Reform Monasticism: Abraham of Kaškar and His Disciples

A history of East-Syrian monasticism in the sixth century remains a desideratum.[66] This is especially the case because the development of what has been termed "reform monasticism" in the Church of the East had

such long-lasting effects.[67] This movement led to a flowering of monastic literary production, much of which is still extant,[68] and the spread of a private, celibate, and more intensive form of monastic practice. The stance against celibacy, which had existed within the Church for some time, was no longer as popular.

In 571 Abraham of Kaškar—a monk who, after studying at the School of Nisibis, visited the famed monks of Scetis in Egypt—established the rule for his monastic community on Mt. Īzlā, approximately twenty kilometers northeast of Nisibis.[69] Īzlā is in fact a long ridge stretching east to west, running parallel with the border between the Roman and the Persian Empires, which is only a few kilometers away. For centuries, the monasteries that would be built on these breathtakingly steep—and beautiful—heights would form a center of monastic culture in the Church of the East.[70] The remains of the Īzlā monasteries are difficult to reach even today, and this factor, in conjunction with their location on the march of the two empires, suggests that the monks would have been left to themselves. From the rules of this community it is apparent that this was a more intense version of the ascetic lifestyle than had been seen in other forms of Syrian cenobitic monasticism. Although the members of this community were not "solitaries" in the stricter sense of the term, such as the lone wonderworking ascetics we read about in Theodoret's *Religious History*, social interaction was nevertheless kept to the minimum requirement of meeting as a group once per week in order to celebrate the Eucharist.[71] The monks devoted themselves to private reading, prayer, fasting, and a life of silence. Abraham, born c. 491–92, led the monastery until his death in 586/8. The leadership soon passed to his disciple, Dadīšōʿ (588–604) and then to Bābai the Great (604–627/8). It was from this monastery that Bābai led the Church of the East during its acephalous period in the early seventh century.[72] The new emphases of "reform" monasticism are evidenced by Thomas of Margā's description of Bābai's reforms at Bēt ʿĀbē, a monastery whose founder, Jacob, had trained at Īzlā.[73] One significant figure in this burgeoning movement of the late sixth and early seventh centuries was Abraham of Nethpar, a learned ascetic who also visited Egypt. His works are only now sorted out, but what we know about them attests to the development of formal intellectual interests among the monks.[74]

A simple comparison of the extant monastic rules attributed to Abraham of Kaškar and his disciple Dadīšōʿ with the canons of the School of Nisibis will help to highlight the differences between reform monasticism and the school movement.[75] Subtle differences which can be parsed out from the monastic and school rules may point to fundamental differences between the two types of institution. However, it is not clear how much importance to attribute to some of these differences, especially if

they are only minor variations. Take, for example, the way the monastic and the school rules establish the foundational authority of their corresponding institutions. The rules of Abraham and of Dadīšō' are based on the authority of scripture and the "Fathers" of the Egyptian desert. Within the monastery itself, the monks looked to the desert fathers, as well as to their stand-ins, the contemporary leaders of the monastery, as models to emulate and to obey.[76] In contrast, in the School—at least according to its rules and the *Cause*—the teacher was subordinate to the institution, even if a cult of personality developed around the more famous teachers. The two sets of canons differ with regard to the authority they attribute to the founders of each institution. Immediately before the series of canons begins, the monastic rule reads:

> For we are lawgivers (*sāymay nāmōsā*) neither for ourselves nor for others but we are servants and serfs of the adorable commandments of our good God. Therefore to each canon which we take from the holy scriptures and from the sayings of the holy fathers we add brief references from them.[77]

In contrast, in the historical description in the prologue of 602 from the canons of Nisibis, the bishop of Nisibis in 496 states to the brothers of the community:

> Since, indeed, you yourselves have such a good zeal about the stability and the beautiful name, and have shown all this care about the correction of your community, no other man shall be a lawgiver (*sā'ēm nāmōsā*) to you except you yourselves.[78]

Although these texts seem to suggest differing relationships to authority and tradition, it is not clear how much significance should be attributed to this disparity, since the School certainly had a strong sense of tradition, as is attested by the institutional history provided by the *Cause*. In fact, the rules of each suggest that the School of Nisibis had numerous structural similarities to the "reform" monasteries. Like the School of Nisibis, the monastic community had two persons in charge, the head and the steward. At Nisibis the head was the main exegete, while in the monastery he was an ascetic holy man, or "father." This tradition of having a head and a steward goes back to earlier East-Syrian monasticism, thus showing how the School of Nisibis was part of this broader tradition.[79] Furthermore, the ascetic capabilities of the heads of the School were praised, just as those of the leaders of the monastery were.[80] Both school and monastic rules attempt to limit the brothers' contact with the outside world, as well as with heretics and other troubling sorts. In contrast to Egyptian monasticism, where work was a central characteristic of the monastic life, manual labor tended not to be part of the monastic ideology in the East.[81] Intellectual labor and prayer held the central position in both school and monastery, and according to Escolan, work was

a sign of imperfection in the monastic life.[82] This fits with the various Nisibene canons restricting students from working except between school sessions.[83]

There were other significant differences between the two types of institution. In "reform" monasticism there was a strong emphasis on quiet; it is no surprise that the monks at Bēt ʿĀbē were so adamantly opposed to Īšōʿyahb's desire to build a school. According to a canon from the rule of Dadīšōʿ, brothers were only permitted to enter the monastery if they could already read since "the monastery served solely the perfection of a brother's spiritual life."[84] This is in contrast to the lack of any such reference in the canons of Nisibis and the references we have to persons receiving their elementary education there.[85]

This difference in educational level may, in part, explain the two different attitudes towards reading in public. For example, compare the following two canons, the former from the rule of Abraham of Kaškar, the latter from the canons of the School of Nisibis:

> About that, that on the day of Sunday when the brothers are gathered together, the brother who is early in his arrival in the church shall take a holy book and shall sit down on his place that is reserved and shall meditate on it until all his brothers come together; so that everyone's mind who comes may be seized by the hearing of reading and may not deviate to hurtful talk.[86]

> The brothers who come to the instruction before the time indicated for the reading of the words of the books and the hearing of the meaning (of them) shall not give themselves to the reading and hearing of the group. These shall be tested with the canon by the *rabbaytā* and outstanding brothers.[87]

To be sure, these two canons have different concerns and are not completely comparable: The former monastic canon concerns specific meetings of the brothers, while the latter school canon has to do with upper-level group instruction in general. Nonetheless, the difference between the two is noteworthy: in the school a brother could not just show up for a group lesson, but had to work his way up to it, while in the monastery a brother would have been encouraged to read on his own. This fits with what we know about the monastery: private reading was a core practice.

Private reading (and prayer) require, of course, privacy, and this is what was offered to the brothers in the monastery. The rule of Abraham begins with a canon advocating quiet within the community, and the rule of Dadīšōʿ states that "a brother shall not stay long with his brother in the cell."[88] As early as the turn of the sixth century, when the canons of Narsai were composed, the brothers in the School of Nisibis were not permitted to live alone or with only one cellmate.[89] Later, these rules became more stringent, as set down in the canons of Ḥĕnānā from the late sixth century. Brothers were compelled not only to study together

but also to eat together.[90] This emphasis on the group shows an explicit awareness of how the School of Nisibis differed from a monastery. For example, one canon states:

> No one shall leave under the pretext of righteousness the dwelling-place with the brothers and go out and build for himself a hut outside the town or by the side of the town, but shall keep the lawful dwelling place. If he desires to excel he may go into a monastery or into the desert.[91]

This canon fits with another one that forbids brothers from begging in the town and may be an attempt to prevent them from acting like monastic "strangers."[92]

This simple comparison of some of the key points of difference between the school and monastic rules, as well as the larger, structural principles they share, helps to demonstrate how these institutions were related to one another. The usual practice in the Church of the East was a move from school to monastery after one had completed one's scriptural education. The school and the monastery were similar in that they both were "intentional communities" with specific institutional practices —and even required certain deportment and dress[93]—yet their goals were distinct. One attempted literally to socialize the "student" and inculcate him with a certain body of knowledge; the other served as a space for him to go beyond this knowledge in the privacy of his cell.

The most important East-Syrian thinker of the early seventh century, Bābai the Great (d. 628/30), was a member of the reform monastic movement and spent much of his life in a monastery on Mt. Īzlā. One of his numerous works, only some of which are still extant, is his commentary on Evagrius of Pontus's *Kephalaia Gnostica.* This work provides important evidence for the reception of Evagrius's works and thought within the Church of the East. The strongly apologetic tone Bābai takes in the introduction of the text demonstrates how concerns about the polluting association of Origenism had reached even into the Sasanian Empire.[94] Bābai explains that there are two versions of the *Kephalaia Gnostica,* one that is authentic and another that has been altered. Bābai is in fact correct about the two versions, but he switches the two around: he considers as authentic the one that has been changed to fit more orthodox standards. He not only defends Evagrius against charges of Origenism, but then goes on to argue that he was an anti-Origenist! He explains that Evagrius was so successful in his life at fighting against Satan and in teaching other monks how to battle their thoughts, that Satan became envious of him and had to attack him after his death. He does this by inspiring certain people to condemn this "second Job" and also to add questionable interpolations to his writings.

Besides his use of an edited version of the *Kephalaia Gnostica,* Bābai

also domesticates Evagrius's thought through his interpretation of it. Many of the philosophical and Evagrian notions identified in the *Cause* are also to be found in this text. One important feature of Bābai's reading of Evagrius's work is that it allows for the mapping of social institutional differences onto the steps of the monastic life, while simultaneously downplaying the more radical aspects of Evagrius's thought. For example, the monastic and scholastic institutionalization that has occurred in the Church of the East affects how Bābai interprets (the redacted version of) *Kephalaia Gnostica* 4.51:

> In the secondary natural contemplation, some are authoritative (*šallīṭānē*) and others are under authorities. But in the singularity (*īḥīdāyūtā*) they are neither authoritative nor under authorities, but all of them will be Gods.[95]

Bābai writes:

> In the spiritual vision to know the mysteries which are in these visible created entities (i.e., visible creation), there are students and teachers, the latter, who have authority over these *theorias* (*te'āwrēyas*), who teach and guide those who are lacking them. In the knowledge of the singularity, which is the divine essence (*ītūtā*), whenever that divine perfection comes into being, there is no one who learns and teaches, since one perfect knowledge increases in each. There is the one for their enjoyment and the one for their punishment, as he says elsewhere, but here there are steps, this which he says, "all of them will be gods," not in nature as the wickedness of Origen and Ḥĕnānā, who go astray (saying) that one nature we are created with God; for he said "gods" and not nature with God, that is, one nature, as the wickedness of these men (would suggest), but "gods"; these are perfect in knowledge, which does not err nor is it led to death by wickedness, as it is said: "I said, 'You are gods and sons of the highest are all of you,'" (Ps 82:6) and "God of gods the Lord spoke (Ps 50:1) "God stood in the assembly of gods," (Ps 82:1); these are the things which are in the place of teachers, leaders, and judges of others.[96]

In his reading of Evagrius Bābai sees the social roles of teacher and student as aimed only at imparting *theōría phusikḗ*, or natural contemplation, while the higher form of knowledge is something one finds alone. Furthermore, Bābai removes the heretical aspect of Evagrius's notion of consubstantiality with the divine ("All of them will be gods") by arguing that "gods" here simply has a figurative meaning: the "gods" are those leaders in the community who have become "perfect in knowledge." Bābai's misprision of Evagrius's work transforms the potentially subversive aspects of this text into an epistemological apologetic for the hierarchy within the East-Syrian school and monastic system. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene is condemned in this same passage. For, as we will see below, it is possible that the controversy surrounding this head of the School of Nisibis derives at least in part from his position regarding access to knowledge of the divine.

## The Culmination of Monastic Ideology: Isaac of Nineveh

As stated above, with the influx of monastic writers from the West as well as the development of new monastic forms, monastic writing flourished in the Church of the East from the later sixth century into the late eighth century. A high point in this literature is the work of Isaac of Nineveh, whose influence transcends not only the Church of the East but Syriac monastic literature as well, since his works were translated into Western languages and disseminated widely.[97] Isaac's ideas may serve as a representative example of the Evagrius-inspired monastic ideology produced by the various extant East-Syrian monastic writers of this period.[98] In other words, Isaac may be seen as the culmination of a whole tradition of monastic writing.[99] In Isaac's writings we find a view of the monastic life which differs from the *Cause*'s "scholastic" understanding of Christianity in a number of areas, including epistemology, hermeneutics, and the notion of grace, as well as the treatment of social interaction and the conception of how each of the above relates to the others.

Isaac describes the "spiritual labour" of the ascetic life as consisting of three levels.

> The initial stage involved labouring with a great deal of recitation (*tenyā*), and just the treading out of the body by means of laborious fasting. The intermediary culminating point lessens the amount of (all) these, exchanging persistence in these for persistence in other things, labouring on (spiritual) reading and especially on kneeling. The culminating point of the third (stage) lessens persistence along the lines of the previous stage, labouring (instead) on meditation and on prayer of the heart.[100]

Isaac states that the practices of one stage do not exclude the practices of the previous one; nonetheless, we can see the progressive movement inwards in this three-stage process, until the practitioner is a solitary, engaged in "prayer of the heart."

Like Evagrius, Isaac maintains the ideal of the Platonic tripartite soul consisting of the faculties of desire, impulse, and reason.[101] This third part, reason, is instrumental to the process of ascetic development, playing a central role in our contact with the divine.

> To the third part there belong: the heart's luminous faith, free (control) of the emotions, hope, and unceasing musing on divine wisdom.[102]

Reason's significance is not due to its capacity to formulate words, sentences, and logical figures, as we demonstrated for the *Cause* in Chapter Seven; it serves rather as an instrument for a more intuitive interaction with the divine, including access to the "luminosity" that Syriac writers had associated with the divine since the writings of Ephrem in the fourth century.[103]

The other two faculties of the soul, desire and impulse, must be accurately aligned in order for the rational faculty to perform correctly.

> These first (two) parts are collectively called the active part of the soul, whereas this other (part) is (called) divine contemplation, that is, the good use to which the part endowed with intelligence – that is, the mind – is put. And when we show endurance in that active part – this consists in continual musing on the kind of virtue that can be perceived by means of the body – (then) this contemplative portion, which is the quality of the faculty of reason, brings the mind close to complete mingling with God, causing it to peer (*ndīq*) into His divine mysteries which (exist) in a luminous state (*šaphyā'īt*) above the world.[104]

The key spiritual practice permitting the ascetic to bring "the mind close to complete mingling with God" is prayer and meditation. After an extensive example of the appropriate form of prayer, Isaac writes:

> Those who wait expectantly to receive in their inner person the grace of the Holy Spirit should engage continually in meditations and supplicatory converse (such as) these: by such converse they will become sanctified, and with an intent such as this they will be held worthy of a gift from on high.[105]

And yet for Isaac, a large part of prayer consists of the reading of scripture.[106] Not only is reading a part of prayer, but it also acts as a catalyst to the spiritual mechanisms Isaac's techniques aim to set into motion. The "labour of reading" "serves as the gate by which the intellect enters into the divine mysteries and takes strength for (attaining) luminosity in prayer."[107] "Without reading (Scripture) the intellect has no means of drawing near to God: (Scripture) draws the mind up and sets it at every moment in the direction of God; it baptizes it from the corporeal world with its insights and causes it to be above the body continually."[108] "The reading [of Scripture] manifestly is the fountainhead that gives birth to prayer."[109] In the end, for Isaac, reading is in fact a form of prayer:

> while [engaged] in his reading, he is never for one moment devoid of the upsurges of prayer. For no reading (of Scripture) which has engaged in this spiritual concern will be empty of the fountain of prayer, seeing that for the most part this person will be inebriated by the mysteries he encounters.[110]

With an understanding of reading as an actively engaged and ultimately transcendent practice, it is no wonder that monastic writers, as we will see below, were opposed to the school practice of lingering on the words and debating the meaning (*sukkālā*) of the text.

Although reading is integral to spiritual development, Isaac warns that even if someone is "very learned and highly educated in the habit of ordinary reading and the exact rendering of words" he may not be permitted "to perceive the (full) sense of what he is reading."[111] Reading also requires correct ascetic practice.

As for the exact meaning, corresponding to the spiritual significance, this is something which, in accordance with the growth of the inner person in the ascetic life and (his) hidden progress, the divine power will cause him to taste – that power which acts as a guide to him on the great and extensive ocean of stillness.[112]

Ultimately, access to the divine is a matter of grace and can occur whenever God permits it.

For every event, natural being and utterance in this creation there is a Sanctuary and a Holy of Holies. When the intellect is given permission and accorded the strength to enter therein, no strength or movement or activity is left remaining in the sense during these periods.[113]

This is the ultimate goal of Isaac's whole monastic practice: the revelation of the divine. In a discussion of the different forms of "overshadowing,"[114] Isaac writes of one:

The mysterious variety of overshadowing such as takes place with any holy person, is an active force which overshadows the intellect, and when someone is held worthy of this overshadowing, the intellect is seized and dilated with a sense of wonder, in a kind of divine revelation.[115]

Various passages in Isaac's writings describe this experience of revelation.[116] Essentially Isaac's point is that the heart can become a sanctuary in which God may abide.

It is clear that if the heart can be worthy to become the location of heaven for the Lord, (then) it has been held worthy of the sum of all contemplation, with a vision of revelation.[117]

In a discussion of the experience of "the glorious mysteries of the divine and revered Nature," Isaac then critiques "those who, being outside stillness and great deprivation, have had the boldness to speak and write concerning this mystery of the divine glory in created things."[118] He continues:

Blessed is the person who has entered this door in the experience of his own soul, for all the power of ink, letters and phrases (*b-'ātwātā wa-b-rukkābē d-meltā*) is too feeble to indicate the delight of this mystery. Many simple people imagine that the philosophers' form of meditation (*hergā*) is a (fore)taste of this converse that conveys the beauties of all of God's mysteries. The blessed bishop Basil speaks of this in a letter to his brother, where he makes a distinction between this perception of creation which the saints receive – that is, the ladder of the intellect of which the blessed Evagrius spoke, and the being raised up above all ordinary vision – and (the perception) of the philosophers. "There is", he said, "a converse which opens up the door so that we can peer (*ndīq*) down into knowledge of created beings, and not up into spiritual mysteries." He is calling the philosophers' (knowledge) "downwards knowledge," for, he says, even those who are subject to the passions can know this (kind of knowledge); this perception which the saints receive through their intellect as a result of grace (*men ṭaybūtā*), however, he calls "knowledge of the spiritual mysteries above."[119]

Later Isaac writes:

> Not by means of the insight of the corporeal world and (its) events does the pleasure of the righteous exist there in the Kingdom of heaven; rather, by means of things in the (world) the intellect is raised up, as though on a ladder, to Him who is the kingdom of the saints, and it abides in wonder.[120]

Much of what Isaac states in the above two quotations could be seen as a direct rebuke of the positions held by the *Cause*. When Isaac refers to "the philosophers," he probably does not have in mind men in togas lingering in porticos: there were few Greek philosophers in seventh-century Mesopotamia. "Philosopher" seems to be a code word for those Christian intellectuals engaged in the study of Aristotle's logical works. Furthermore, in the above quotation Brock has translated *rukkābē d-meltā* as "phrases." However, based upon my presentation in Chapter Seven, the philosophical implications of this locution are better drawn out if it is translated more fully as "the combinations of speech," or "logical combinations." Philosophy is often, but not always, a negative term for the monastic writers. This is in contrast to, for example, the *Cause*, where the term, "philosophy" (Syr. *pīlāsāwpūtā*), is used in reference to the work of Moses, Jesus, and Diodore of Tarsus.[121] We should recall that Isaac and other monastic writers would have known texts such as the *Life of Antony*, mentioned above, in which the unlettered Antony refutes two pagan philosophers.[122] In this refutation philosophy and paganism are conflated (despite the Syriac version's many strayings from the Greek). The "philosophers" Isaac attacks were Christians, but when spurning the "wisdom of the Greeks," what better way to malignantly mislabel one's enemies than to call them "philosophers," a title with pagan and foreign implications?

Isaac was exceptional in his virtuosity, his influence, and the extremity of some of his positions, such as his radical anchoritism and his explicit antinomianism.[123] However, his ideas and interests fit squarely within the Church of his day. His work is not an isolated phenomenon. Otherwise, it would not have been so influential. He takes the Christian notion of grace to its logical conclusion and thus shuts out the rest of the world, which seems to represent for him, at best, an unnecessary hindrance.[124]

The goal of monastic spirituality was radically different from that of the intellectual practices advocated by the *Cause*. In several articles Sebastian Brock has illustrated the importance of the notion of "Prayer of the Heart" in the Syriac tradition, laying out the rich imagery that has developed around this core concept in Syriac spirituality.[125] The private meditation of the Christian ascetic was likened to the liturgical practice of the Church: the altar of sacrifice, the holy sanctuary, was internalized so that liturgy was performed in the heart itself. Borrowing a term from

Henri Corbin, Brock refers to prayer of the heart as ultimately *theophanic*, that is, it reveals the divine to its practitioner.[126] The internalization of this type of prayer is so extreme that prayer becomes wholly privatized, and even the state of having a pure heart can be characterized in itself as a form of prayer.[127] It is this "Prayer of the Heart," which Brock describes, that is characteristic of the monastic tendencies of later writers, such as Isaac of Nineveh.

However, with the influx of Greek philosophical notions into the Syriac milieu, older notions that we find in the writings of Aphrahat and Ephrem and in the *Liber Graduum* were "hellenized" and placed in Greek dress.[128] At the end of Chapter Seven I suggested that behind its numerous concepts and terms the *Cause* continues to maintain certain ideas that go back to Ephrem the Syrian. Similarly, an indigenous Syriac tradition is being expressed in Greek terms in the later monastic litertaure. Behind the Evagrian focus on the *noûs* monastic writers continued to express the "Prayer of the Heart" that we find in earlier texts such as the *Liber Graduum.*

## Explicit Criticism of "Philosophy," Bookishness, and the School Movement

Two of Isaac's later seventh-century contemporaries, his fellow countryman Dadīšō' of Bēt Qaṭrāyē and Simeon d-Ṭaybūtēh, share with him a remarkably similar technical terminology for the monastic life.[129] Like Isaac, Simeon and Dadīšō' have a thorough knowledge of the previous monastic tradition. These three writers may have in fact crossed paths, since the biographical tradition associates each of them with the as yet unidentified Monastery of Rabban Šābūr in southwestern Iran.[130]

With lesser eloquence—yet perhaps greater clarity of thought—Dadīšō' is a writer with an outlook similar to that of Isaac. He promotes an "Egyptian" style of monasticism, emphasizing silence and solitude, and was heavily influenced by Evagrius. His intellectual heritage is made apparent by a simple glance at the order of frequency of authors he cites in his *Commentary on the Asceticon of Abba Isaiah*: Evagrius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Mark the Monk, and "Macarius the Great."[131] In this *Commentary*, which treats the desert wisdom found in the ascetical handbook attributed to Abba Isaiah of Scetis (but which was perhaps anonymously produced in Gaza), Dadīšō' makes a number of passing jabs at and disdainful references to *eskōlāyē*, that is, school men and students. As Abramowski has suggested, these are worth looking at because they tell us something about what the life of the *eskōlāyē* entailed, but they are also useful because they provide explicit information on the tension that could exist between the school and the monastery.[132]

Dadīšōʿ defends "spiritual" exegesis, that is, monastic allegorical exegesis, especially in order that he

> may muzzle the mouths of certain stupid exegetes who, thanks to their knowledge of the jargon that they have learnt—jargon that is totally divorced from any idea of good conduct—hold saints in contempt when these latter introduce examples from the Scriptures and from the natural world, and take them to refer spiritually to godliness and righteousness.[133]

Dadīšōʿ further complains that members of the school movement even attack Abba Isaiah. Abramowski paraphrases:

> Some of the *eskōlāyē, interpreters* (*bādōqē*) *or who are called by them teachers* (*mallphānē*) – of words, without works – who left the common knowledge of scriptures which cannot be acquired but by practice of the commandments . . . deride the saint abbas Isaiah, saying that he is the teacher (*mallphānā*) of the youths in the school (*bēt sephrē*); I myself have heard this once from one of them and was astonished by his audacity and stupidity. The contrary is true: bishops, teachers and wise men would do well to learn from Isaiah when they start with monasticism.[134]

In a comment on Isaiah's warning not to correct a brother "who is singing a psalm or reading," Dadīšōʿ explains that such behavior belongs to "a hard passion and an evil blemish," and specifies that it may occur "in the assembly of brothers, in the service, and in prayer, in the sessions (*mawtbē*),[135] or at the tables of the brothers."[136] Such public correction causes dissension among the brothers. Dadīšōʿ continues:

> For in the common assembly (*knūšyā d-gawwā*) of the brothers, whenever they have gathered together for prayer or for reading it is right to illustrate the meaning of the words of the Fathers for one another but not the reading of the words (*qeryātā da-šmāhē*). For this is the work of the *eskōlāyē*, but not of the distinguished and watchful solitaries.[137]

Dadīšōʿ associates the practice of the school with a superficial focus on the exteriors of language. Furthermore, correct reading is something that would have already been learned by many of the monks. To criticize another concerning the trivialities of pronunciation would be an insult: it was an implicit suggestion that that person still belonged in the school and not the monastery.

In the middle of his explication of Isaiah's thirteenth discourse Dadīšōʿ begins to discuss the different ways in which demons can attack human beings. They have invented an "alternative means"[138] of assault: "constant and disordered meditation on scripture, a disparate wandering after seeking its meanings, and suspension of labors, of prayer, of reflection on God, and of meditation on self-correction." This leads Christians to engage in intellectual disputes.[139] Dadīšōʿ complains of brothers leaving off the correct monastic practice and spending all their time focusing on

the "meaning of scripture" (*sukkālā da-ktābē*) "like *eskōlāyē*."[140] Then when they come together with one another they end up falling into disputes. Thus, Dadīšōʿ explains, Isaiah recommends against this "dispersed wandering"[141] after the meaning of scripture. In fact, the life of the school was in part invented by the demons in order to distract monks from the correct monastic practice.

> Then at this time in the days of the Egyptian fathers in this evil and harmful battle the demons fought with the solitaries within the silence, while they were compelling those who were instructed in (scriptures) and quick in their temperament that they might be well versed in the learning of the philosophers and the wisdom of the Greeks, while reading and applying their mind to the books of Aristotle the Philosopher, the ones which are for the learning of reason (*yullphānā da-mlīlūtā*), I mean, the *Categories*, *Peri Hermeneias*, *Apodeiktikos* (i.e., Posterior Analytics), and the rest of such as these. Those are the ones which the blessed Evagrius condemns in *Demonstrations from the Holy Scriptures*, which he places in his book against the eight sinful passions and against the enticing demons. For he says this in those things which he sets against the demon of vainglory thus: "Against the soul, which, due to the vainglory which holds it, desires to learn the wisdom of the Greeks, the wisdom of this world is foolishness" (1 Cor 3:19). Again in one of his letters he writes to one of his disciples thus: "Despise reason, for it is not useful for our path. For the kingdom of God was not in word (*meltā*) but in power" (1 Cor 4:20), that is, the purity of heart, which comes into being from love. With things of this sort the demons fought, but with those who were untaught (Gr. *idiōtēs*) and unable to learn the controversy (*drāšā*) of wisdom, they would compel them to reflect and meditate on the meaning of the scriptures, while giving up the meditation beneficial to the salvation of their life, in the way of the *eskōlāyē*.[142]

Despite the apparent total condemnation of training in logic, Dadīšōʿ's complaints should be examined in light of his own exegetical and interpretive practice. As Draguet notes, in his works "the tools of philological analysis are used to serve the doctrinal synthesis."[143] Dadīšōʿ had the same training as these schoolmen but he had moved beyond it.

Another aspect of the life of the *eskōlāyē* that Dadīšōʿ condemns several times is the communal-liturgical focus of the schools.[144] For him the life of the *eskōlāyē* is characterized by an excess of hymns and responses. This fits with the evidence provided in Chapter Four for the liturgical aspect of the school movement. Aside from the picayune attention to logic and authoritative and correct meaning, what was bothersome about the East-Syrian schools for writers like Dadīšōʿ was the excessive focus on group prayer. Moreover, that his critique is two-pronged, aimed at both the school's intellectual approach and the kind of social interaction its members engaged in, coincides with my larger argument that the differences between the monastery and the school were correlative: each had a mutually corresponding intellectual approach and social life.

Simeon d-Ṭaybūtēh ("of his Grace"), another monastic writer of the

later seventh century, shows the same interest as others in delineating the different stages of the spiritual life. For him also the higher form of contemplation, a prayer of the heart, is the goal of the spiritual life.[145] Simeon sets Greek philosophy and the tools of logic in an earlier stage of spiritual progress in a manner that should be familiar by now from the sources already discussed. In the following passage Simeon shows an open disdain for Greek philosophy.

> Fie upon that love of natural knowledge (*īdaʿtā naphšānāytā*) which adorns itself with the desire for new inventions, and which in its eagerness for learning works and lives in happiness, and thus deceives even the children of light, in advising them that we must, together with the labours of penitence, the fulfillment of the commandments and the pursuit of the state of impassibility, exert ourselves greatly in particular readings (*qeryānā prīšā*), which the spiritual exercises encourage, in order that we may, through the teaching of science, reap help from the mysteries hidden in the books of the Fathers, and in order that by means of the channel of learning (*organon d-yullphānā*) we may move from knowledge to knowledge; but the knowledge which is composed (*metrakbā*) of, or falls under (*nāphlā ṭhēt*), letters and words, is the second natural knowledge of learning (*īdaʿtā (h)y kyānāytā d-tartein d-yullphānā*), used by the Greek philosophers and wise men, and from the time of Solomon to that of Christ no one has used it without passions, as the passions are the instrument (Gr. *órganon*) of the wisdom of the world. Even the Books which were written through the Spirit were not able to express with ink the happiness that was infused in the heart of the prophets, apostles and Fathers.[146]

In this passage Simeon is clearly employing Evagrius's categorization of the different forms of knowledge. "Natural" knowledge, or what is also called "psychic" knowledge, is on a lower tier than "spiritual" or "essential knowledge." Thus, the learning of Greek philosophy, which is characterized by letters, words, and combinations, is lesser than the monk's spiritual acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, Simeon's second use of the Greek word *órganon* here may be seen as a subtle jab both at the similarly named tool of reason and at the collection of Aristotle's works that served as an introduction to this tool and was thus called by the same name.

The extremely positive view of rationality as the key instrument by which we are able to acquire knowledge of God, as discussed in Chapter Seven, seems to be the position that both Dadīšōʿ and Simeon are opposing, that is, what Evagrius characterized as *theōría phusikḗ*. However, the two of them had probably studied the *Organon* in their own educations. Dadīšōʿ's commentary bears traces of the influence of Greek philosophical texts and ideas. Like the monks of Bēt ʿĀbē at the beginning of this chapter, Dadīšōʿ and Simeon think that the intellectual life of the school is below them and, in fact, a hindrance to the monastic life. The monk no longer required group study and the sharpening of reason; he sought God through silence and private meditation.

Aside from the more direct and often intellectually oriented critiques of the school movement, in some of the hagiographical sources we can also isolate what seems to be an implicit rejection of bookishness and life in a school. In its place a monastic life, one focused more on private spiritual exercise, is advocated. In this hagiographic rejection of the school and all it entailed we must bear in mind the imaginative level on which these texts work. Just as the conversion to Christianity was understood as a rejection of a pagan or a secular life for a life of asceticism and Christian learning, so also the transition from the life of group study to that of a more private devotion could be taken as an explicit break with the past. Such conversions and breaks with the past must be seen as narrative forms. Yet this is not to suggest that imagining a transition as a radical transformation denies the possibility of an actual change in real people's lives. How these men imagined and wrote about their lives is often the way they led them.

The evidence for the radical rejections of the life of the school for that of the monastery must be teased out from the sources. Some texts offer glimpses of this but we must be wary of how we read them. For example, the *Chronicle of Siirt* tells how, in the early to mid-seventh century, after completing his studies Rabban Šābūr became a teacher (*mallphānā*) at the "School of Dayr Miḥrāq." He then went to Šuštar with seven of his "students" (*eskōlāyē*).[147] However, they did not go to the school founded there by a certain Theodore, according to the *Chronicle,* but instead they went to an associate of Theodore, Rabban Ḥāyā, who, after being converted to the monastic life by Abraham of Kaškar and renouncing his wealth, traveled to Egypt and Jerusalem before returning and constructing his own monastery.[148] "They went to Rabban Ḥāyā in Kaškar and he taught them the monastic life and thrust upon them and Rabban Šābūr the canons of Mār Abraham."[149] Rabban Šābūr then builds his own monastery. Can we see in this brief story the rejection of the life of the school for that of the monastery? It is difficult to say, especially since we have no knowledge of the intention of the actors nor even if the story, as reported by the *Chronicle,* is accurate.

Similar evidence of a rejection of the life of the school may be extracted from the abbreviated lives of Abraham of Kaškar and Bābai of Nisibis. No biography is extant of Abraham of Kaškar, the great East-Syrian monastic reformer of the sixth century. However, there is an abbreviated version, which is perhaps based on one or all three of the lives composed by his disciples.[150] This abbreviated life shows signs of an antipathy toward the practices of the school movement. Like other saints' lives, after the prologue the *Life of Abraham* describes the hero's early years and his education.

From his youth his parents handed him over to be trained in the language and literature (*sephrā*) of the holy scriptures. And after he learned and was richly endowed with the whole of learning, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a divine revelation.[151]

The angel instructs him to go out from his parents' land, à la his namesake Abraham, and to go to Ḥīrtā, where "he settled ([*y*]*īteb*) briefly and was occupied (*ʿnē*) with the meditation (*hergā*) of the holy scriptures,"[152] perhaps at the school I mentioned in the previous chapter. From this point on he converts local Arabs. This is not unlike the way Mār Abā is described in his life as making excursions from the School of Nisibis to convert "heretics," as was also written of Gregory of Nisibis. Abraham's development as a Christian is described with the pedagogical language typical of the Syriac milieu.[153] He then travels broadly, visiting the monastic centers of Jerusalem and of Scetis in Egypt. On his return to the East, Abraham settles in Nisibis, joins the School, and gains a great reputation because of his miraculous cure of a daughter of one of the town elites who is possessed by a demon.[154]

Then he turned and came to his cell, and he served God night and day, and he was sitting and feeding the strangers and the poor. He abided in the cave of Mār Jacob, the bishop of Nisibis, in the place which is called Mārdā, and from that day he left off the scribal life (*kātōbūtā*) and was hidden from human intercourse.[155] From the roots of the wilderness he was nourished, and God revealed to the holy men about him and they gathered unto him from everywhere. He taught them the way of ascent to heaven and the practice of the monastic life.[156]

The saint performs many miracles, particularly miraculous healings of the sick. The text then goes on to describe his career instituting monastic rules and training various disciples to "set up their residence in the quiet of the mountains and the desert wastes and to keep themselves far from human intercourse."[157]

The abbreviated *Life of Abraham* employs the pedagogical language typical of the East-Syrian schools to describe the master-disciple relationship in East-Syrian monasticism. However, the rejection of "the scribal life" and the antipathy Abraham feels towards human intercourse represents a tendency that seems to counter what we find in the school tradition. Furthermore, this rejection of the school corresponds with the apparent epistemological differences between the abbreviated *Life* and the ideas found in the *Cause*, for example. The *Life* puts an emphasis on God's revelations to human beings. At the beginning of the *Life*, Abraham's monastery on Mt. Īzlā is described as "a place of the (divine) presence (*škīntā*) of the revelations of the Lord."[158]

This tendency is continued in the abbreviated *Life of Bābai* that follows the *Life of Abraham* in the same manuscript. Bābai is engaged in

teacher-student relations, but the subject matter is different from that of the schools: "He learned about the battles and the combats which are against demons."[159] Perhaps punning on the school usage of the root *y-t-b* and its cognates, Bābai "sits" in a cave.[160] In turn, he teaches those who gather around him "the practices of the monastic life."[161] Bābai himself "received a revelation from God that he should ascend Mt. Īzlā and build on it a monastery."[162] Bābai's *Life* has a demonological emphasis that clearly derives from Egypt, and like the *Life of Antony*, another monk who rejects formal book learning for divine inspiration, the *Life of Bābai* ends with a reference to his monastery as being "like a great city," recalling the same famous line from the *Life of Antony*.[163]

In contrast to the *Lives* of Abraham and Bābai, the *Cause* has a different understanding of revelation and the divine presence. In the *Cause*, only the angels enjoy direct revelation from God: "Before him they stand continually and enjoy revelations of him, just as Daniel said: *A thousand thousands stand before him and a myriad myriads serve him* (Dan 7:10)."[164] God does not reveal himself directly to human beings. The divine presence is something more distant. God revealed himself, according to the *Cause*, in his act of creation.

> But if not (i.e., if he had not revealed himself in this way), not even this crumb of knowledge would be able to fix its gaze on that divine presence (*škīntā*), since all of those things of his go unspeakably beyond the thought and reason (*meltā*) of created things.[165]

Otherwise, the divine presence would remain accessible only to the angels, such as "the Cherubim, who bear and carry solemnly the divine presence (*škīntā*) which is girt round with bands of fire. And now and then from it (i.e., the divine presence) shines forth a powerful light underneath all of them."[166] Even this angelic knowledge, however, is limited. We might recall that Theodore of Mopsuestia's exegesis of Genesis 1, which was so influential on the *Cause*, argues that visible creation served as a lesson for the angels, since they could not know God either: reason is an essential tool for both humans and angels to learn about the Creator. In contrast to this limited notion of our accessibility to the divine, Thomas of Margā regularly describes monks as having a more immediate knowledge of the divine. This fits with what we have seen in the writings of Isaac, Dadīšō', and Simeon and in the *Lives* of Abraham and Bābai.[167]

## Conclusion

The Evagrian emphasis on inspiration over learning was nothing new. In his study, which includes a description of the struggle in Palestine between Sabas and the Origenists who entered Sabas's monastery, John

Binns notes that in early monasticism "knowledge tended to be regarded as the result of a divine charism rather than hard work and study."[168] The essential epistemological difference between the East-Syrian school and the monastery attests to a further development of what Binns addresses and is well illustrated by a similar dichotomy which would develop later in the Islamic world:

> Although the philosophers and mystics in medieval Islam (not to mention Judaism and Christianity) would both agree that truth is tantamount to knowledge of God, they differed with respect to what this knowledge consists of and how one discovers it. At issue, then, is the instrument by which the individual receives knowledge: Does it occur through the intellect or the imagination? For the philosophers, knowledge of God is equivalent to understanding the world (namely, the various sciences) and is something that arises naturally and syllogistically in the intellect. For the mystics, however, knowledge of God is intuited semiotically and arises in the imagination both supernaturally and directly from God.[169]

The epistemological difference between these two groups centers on their differing evaluation of the instrumentality of reason for accessing divine knowledge and is in fact characteristic of the dichotomy in Western religion in general between the philosopher and the mystic: both agree that truth is knowledge of God but disagree with respect to how this knowledge is attained.[170] As our own contemporary debates about the rarified language of cultural criticism can attest, one person's indispensable epistemological tool is another person's jargon.

Beyond issues of heterodoxy and intellectual dispute, excessive learning could simply cause envy. Thomas of Margā describes how the seventh-century Aphnīmāran, being extremely learned in the scriptures, "composed many works and 'responses', and treatises on doctrine in a perfect manner," and was thus "like unto the pillar of light which led the Hebrews."[171] On account of this, he was accused of being a Messalian, tied to a bier for the dead, and carried out "to the place where they make asses run."[172] Messalians, or Euchites as they were also called in Greek (lit. "praying ones"), were a loosely defined ascetic movement which advocated an immediate access to the divine. Messalianism was regularly condemned throughout Late Antiquity, especially for its challenges to the social order.[173] The accusation against Aphnīmāran is therefore fitting: the greatest insult to his learning was to suggest that he belonged to a group of people associated with an excess of enthusiasm and an utter lack of learning and tradition. However, at the same time, I suspect that the numerous accusations of and great concern about Messalianism, which we find in a number of contemporary sources, point to the flipside of the antischolastic stance: labeling someone a Messalian was a useful tool for controlling those who seemed to have a bit too much inspiration.[174]

The dichotomy between spiritualist and logician should not mistakenly be mapped onto the modern Enlightenment dichotomy between mysticism and philosophy, however much these two dichotomies are related.[175] The "mystics" in this case fully accept philosophy, but see it as only an earlier stage in the spiritual *cursus honorum*, while the "philosophers" are always aware that, grace permitting, "philosophy" is irrelevant. Furthermore, we need not believe these texts when they take such distinct ideological positions. Monks may talk about inspiration and revelation, while the school promoted learning and reason, but many of their differences are perceived (the narcissism of minor differences?) rather than real: the monastery is a place of learning just as the school is a place of retreat.

In Chapter Seven I argued that the reception of Aristotelian logic in the Church of the East, as attested by its use in the *Cause*, was mapped onto a prior Ephremic understanding of language as well as Ephrem's notion of the divine condescension into words for human benefit. However, Ephrem is also the father of the trajectory of East-Syrian thought examined in this chapter, that is, the spiritualist monastic ideology which sees human progress toward knowledge of the divine as culminating in the opposite of words, that is, in silence.[176] The ideology of the school movement fits into the monastic movement as an early stage in the process of (re)discovering the Creator. Similarly, the monastery required the kind of prior training that the school could offer. Thus, a homologous relationship existed between the intellectual and social life advocated by the school and the monastery.

However, the differences between school and monastery were also the rhetoric of a religious elite that shared much in common. Certainly there were underlying structural differences between these two institutions, but in delineating these subtle differences we risk drawing a sharper distinction than was perhaps readily perceived or existed. Presumably, for most East Syrians the progression of an individual from school to monastery was a natural one. The sources provide numerous instance of this.[177] A sampling of figures who, according to Thomas of Margā's *Book of Governors*, went through the School of Nisibis includes Mār Elijah from Ḥīrtā, the busybody monk who finds that some of the monks are living with women and even have children!;[178] Sāhdōnā, the monastic writer, who became an apostate from the Church of the East;[179] and Rabban Gabriel, who followed Sāhdōnā to Edessa to debate with him and also sparred verbally with other West Syrians.[180] Even ʿĔnānīšōʿ, the teacher (*mallphānā*) and monk, was a student at Nisibis.[181] This significant figure in the further "Egyptianization" of East-Syrian monasticism studied the Fathers intensely, and then after visiting Jerusalem and Scetis, returned and was asked to help draw up monastic canons.[182] His story provides an

example of a mellow blend of ascetic and learned life. We are told he "composed definitions and divisions of various things, which were written upon the walls of his cell."[183] He is also the editor of the famous *Paradise of the Fathers*, a seventh-century compilation of various Egyptian monastic works. The tensions between the requirements of learning and the need for monastic solitude were negotiated by the slow and eventual removal from society that the ascetics aimed at. Sāhdōnā himself in his writings shows a clear awareness of the tension between grace and the need for community, and the inevitable need for masters and peers early in one's spiritual career.[184]

Our main narrative source, Thomas of Margā, despite evidence such as the story he tells of the controversy at Bēt ʿĀbē, depicts the relationship between school and monastery as far more irenic than many of the monastic texts discussed above would have us believe. For example, where several of the monastic writers condemn those they refer to as the "philosophers," Thomas employs the same term to describe learned masters of the monastic life. Thomas sets forth a specific modus operandi: village school, perhaps a stint at the School of Nisibis, cenobitic life, and then the life of the anchorite. This move through various institutions is presented as the natural course of training, and he apparently thinks that the Greek philosophers' "schools" worked on a similar model. The monastery of Abraham of Kaškar is compared to classical Athens,[185] and Thomas explains how Pythagoras, Homer, Plato, and Hippocrates all advocated the life of solitude and silence.[186] However, even Thomas notes anomalies: he apologizes several times for those holy men who are completely unlearned.[187] More commonly, he refers to his subjects as trained and enlightened in the scriptures.[188] Perhaps he was writing after the tensions between the two different institutions had been resolved. Or, what I find more likely, the monastic rejection of the life of the school, while manifesting potentially emergent social and intellectual frictions, functioned to facilitate the easy flow of students from school to monastery, a process which was a regular part of life in the Church of the East. The students would most likely have come to feel that the suprarational, revelatory knowledge of the monk was more profound than the deliberate, imparted learning of the schoolman, and this may have instilled in them the desire to depart the school for the more intense rigors of the monastery.

## Appendix: Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene and the Decline of the School of Nisibis

The sources for the School of Nisibis become sparse after the sixth century. We may infer from this that the School suffered a decline, but to what extent remains unclear. The School continues to be referred to by

later sources, but only in passing and briefly. For example, Īšō'yahb III refers to "the common mother, our holy school" in a letter to a teacher in Nisibis in the 650s.[189] There are references in the later sources to East-Syrian men going to Nisibis to study, but after this point we lack qualitative sources such as the School's canons and the cause genre from the sixth century. One factor in this possible decline may have been the contemporaneous and rapid spread of schools throughout Mesopotamia. Nisibis was no longer the exception, as the three types of East-Syrian school (independent, monastic, and village, discussed in Chapter Eight) could be found in much of Sasanian Mesopotamia, and the competition from rival schools would have detracted from the honor Nisibis had long received.

The School could have gone into decline solely due to the catastrophic events of the seventh century, which were mentioned at the very beginning of this volume. The early seventh century was a time of political and religious upheaval in the region. The city of Nisibis in particular may have been affected adversely by the political realignment that occurred after the Arab conquest. Chase Robinson has suggested that cities "such as Edessa and Nisibis suffered multiple misfortune" in the early Islamic period.[190] John of Phenek states that there was a rebellion in Nisibis against the Arabs in c. 690.[191] Such a rebellion would have prevented Nisibis, and by extension the School, from staying in favor with the new authorities.

In conjunction with these larger trends and transformations, one internal event at the School that also played out within the broader Church seems to have had a significant role in diminishing the School's reputation as well as its size. This was the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene, an event for which there are a number of references. This controversy primarily concerned his theology, but also it reflects his apparent aberrations in exegesis from the East-Syrian tradition and perhaps also the tensions which could develop between different institutions within the broader ecclesiastical hierarchy.[192] Ḥĕnānā's theology and the controversy it stirred up remained a threat to the Church for some time. Two centuries later Timothy I reprimanded a certain Naṣr for relying on arguments made by Ḥĕnānā , reminding him that this heretic had been condemned in a synod under Catholicos Sabrīšō' in 605.[193]

The *Chronicle of Siirt* describes a mass exodus from the School under Ḥĕnānā.[194] However, it is not clear how much significance should be attributed to this episode nor what bearing this exodus had on the future of the School. Nonetheless, it no doubt had some impact on the School's future. Labourt suggested that the School of Nisibis could no longer compete with other schools whose orthodoxy had not been impugned due to this event.[195] The author of the *Cause* may be the same

Barḥadbĕšabbā who signed the condemnation of Ḥĕnānā at the Synod of 605 and who is described as leaving the School at this time along with the other students.[196] If this is the same person, then his relationship with Ḥĕnānā had changed. This rejection of the head of the School does not fit with the panegyric-like treatment Ḥĕnānā receives in the *Cause*.[197] The *Cause* was probably written before Ḥĕnānā's more controversial positions were articulated. However, there remains the possibility that Barḥadbĕšabbā is engaged in a kind of prescriptive apologetics, that is, he is describing how Ḥĕnānā *should* relate to the tradition of Theodore of Mopsuestia and what the correct theological positions are.

Unfortunately, reconstructing Ḥĕnānā's thought is difficult, despite the extent of his literary output.[198] 'Abdīšō' attributes a number of works to him in his *Catalogue*,[199] but only two are extant, *On Golden Friday* (the first Friday after Pentecost) and *On the Rogation* (i.e., on the different kinds of prayer), both of which are examples of the cause genre.[200] These two extant texts do not attest any particular aberrations in his theology or his approach to scripture. In fact, despite one passage that has been flagged as of questionable East-Syrian orthodoxy, the content of these two texts seems standard for the literature of the East-Syrian school.[201] *On Golden Friday* includes a passage expressing notions similar to what we find in the passage in the *Cause* which treats the creation narrative of Genesis 1, the same passage which has been discussed in earlier chapters.[202] In the section of this text where Ḥĕnānā lays out the divisions of the parts of scripture and how these divisions are to be read, his method is reminiscent of that found in Junillus Africanus's *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis*.[203] His *On Rogations* contains a section corresponding to the contemplative, Evagrian spirituality becoming popular in the Church of the East at the time.[204]

From the little that is extant of his works, and especially from a number of polemical references to him and his followers, scholars have reconstructed the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā in a number of ways. Ḥĕnānā was accused of flouting the exegetical authority of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and it has been suggested that the confirmations of Theodore's place within the Church at councils in 585 and 586 are veiled references to him.[205] It has been said that he displaced Theodore's exegesis of scripture with that of John Chrysostom, but this does not seem to be the case.[206] Gerrit Reinink posits a more nuanced understanding of the controversy when he suggests that it stems from his more liberal position regarding exegesis, allowing for the introduction of other exegetical writers aside from Theodore of Mopsuestia into the curriculum of the School.[207]

Luise Abramowski has addressed the question of Ḥĕnānā's thought in her analyses of the Christology of Bābai the Great.[208] She goes so far as to argue that the formation of the East-Syrian orthodox position attested

by the Council of 612 and exemplified in the works of Bābai occurred specifically as a reaction to the thought of Ḥĕnānā and his followers.[209] Abramowski does not see Ḥĕnānā as a turncoat to the Miaphysite cause but rather as maintaining a Christology of hypostatic union within Christ closer in line to that of Neochalcedonianism, although he may have come to this through the East-Syrian tradition. Neochalcedonian influence is possible, since it seems that by the late sixth century more information about Western ecclesiastical events had been filtered through to the Church of the East.[210] Much of this depends on how one reads the scanty sources. For example, one piece of Ḥĕnānā's thought extant in Bābai's *De Unione* is his false etymological argument that the title "Messiah" (*mšīḥā*) derives from the root meaning "to measure" (Syr. m-š-ḥ).[211] Abramowski suggests that the source for this usage is a work of Cyril of Alexandria translated into Syriac to which Ḥĕnānā would have had access.[212] Thus, according to Abramowski, Ḥĕnānā was employing Cyril's thought against members of his own church. However, such an interest in etymology, perhaps typical of a school setting, can also be found in Ḥĕnānā's two extant examples of the *Cause* genre.[213] He, like his contemporaries, may have thought that the language of God at the time of creation was Syriac.[214] This would perhaps mark his peculiar etymology of the word "messiah" as something distinctly more local.

Moreover, we should keep in mind the polemical intent of the sources. Reinink has examined Bābai's assertion that Ḥĕnānā was aligned with Gabriel of Sinjar, the West-Syrian court doctor of Khosro II, in his *Life of George*.[215] This tying of Ḥĕnānā to the West-Syrian cause has been contested; his theological position seems to have been closer to Chalcedonian orthodoxy, or perhaps even derived from an internal East-Syrian development.[216] A controversial figure of the following generation who never knew Ḥĕnānā but seems to have been influenced by his theology, Sāhdōnā (Martyrios), was also condemned for his heretical views.[217] It has been argued similarly that Sāhdōnā's position derives directly from indigenous East-Syrian theological developments and need not be explained as being due to malign external influence.[218]

Ḥĕnānā and his followers (lit. the *ḥnānāyē*) are repeatedly condemned in Bābai's *De Unione*. While at times Bābai connects Ḥĕnānā's thought to that of Cyril and other "theopaschites,"[219] in the chapter on the resurrection his followers are identified with Origenists and those who posit that the resurrection body will be spherical.[220] What exactly Ḥĕnānā's theology was is difficult to determine from Bābai's statements in *De Unione*. He seems to have had certain leanings that made it easier for Bābai to connect him to the West Syrians. However, "theopaschite"—i.e., Monophysite—was a standard form of abuse for an East-Syrian, as was "Origenist." In his commentary on the *Kephalaia Gnostica* of Evagrius of

Pontus, Bābai mentions Ḥĕnānā and his followers once each. Ḥĕnānā is placed next to Origen as someone who would equate the human essence with the divine.[221] His followers as well as those of Origen and the "Chaldaeans" are categorized together as those who attribute knowledge and providence to the stars.[222] However, Bābai is engaging in hyperbole, just as when he raises the specter of Messalianism. Ironically, if Ḥĕnānā and his followers were truly in agreement with Origen, as Bābai suggests, this would make them closer in thought to Bābai's own hero, Evagrius of Pontus. As we have seen, Bābai relied on a domesticated version of Evagrius's work in his commentary on the *Kephalaia Gnostica*, going out of his way to interpret away those aspects of Evagrius's thought he would have deemed heterodox.

Labourt suggested that Ḥĕnānā probably studied in Syria or Palestine.[223] This would fit with his Christological tendency as well as the apparently Evagrian-inspired Origenism of which he was accused. Travels to the West by monks and schoolmen in search of learning were not uncommon at this time. The *Chronicle of Siirt* says that Ḥĕnānā traveled while in exile from the School during the period of his predecessor, Abraham of Bēt Rabban; however, it states that this was in the East (Arab. *al-mašriq*).[224] It was not uncommon for East Syrians to travel to the West, and we have examined the influx of monastic ideas, especially Evagrian ones, into the East earlier in this chapter. However, Ḥĕnānā need not have made such a sojourn. He could just as easily come across such ideas from texts as well as from Christians moving eastwards.

Another approach to this controversy is to examine Ḥĕnānā's relationship with the bishop of the city, Gregory of Kaškar, who played a role in his condemnation. Ignoring the theological content of the controversy for a moment, we may speculate whether some tension may have arisen due to a conflict regarding ecclesiastical authority. The dispute between Ḥĕnānā and Gregory could be comparable to the problems that arose between Narsai and Barṣaumā soon after the foundation of the School. Narsai received much support from Barṣaumā, the bishop of Nisibis, on his first arrival in the city; he later had a falling out with him, one having to do with equal honors and jurisdiction.[225] Gregory, who was discussed in the previous chapter, was interested in the school movement, as his biographical tradition strongly attests, and therefore it is possible that an impetus for his dislike of Ḥĕnānā had to do with issues pertaining to the running of the School. The size and independence of the School of Nisibis made it an exceptional institution: the head exegete may have received as much respect as the bishop of Nisibis himself.

As in Bābai's *Life of George*, the *Chronicle of Siirt* presents the conflict as ultimately reflecting the ongoing West-Syrian attempts at subverting the Church of the East. The force of Gregory's eventually successful attacks

on Ḥĕnānā was blunted, according to the *Chronicle*, by Gabriel of Sinjar, the Miaphysite doctor to the king. The *Chronicle* offers a seedy explanation for Gabriel's support of Ḥĕnānā: the doctor had been excommunicated from the Church of the East by Gregory for bigamy.[226] Again, just as in the controversy between Narsai and Barṣaumā, flaws of character, such as envy and desire, and the unwanted presence of women are introduced as explanatory devices for conflicts that probably had a more complex genesis.[227]

One question that needs to be addressed is whether or not there is a correlation between the theological controversy between Bābai and Ḥĕnānā and their different institutional settings. This would not have to do with their Christology as such but rather with their reception of the thought of Evagrius of Pontus. If Ḥĕnānā was a more radical Evagrian than Bābai and yet worked within a school setting, as opposed to a monastery, then Bābai's antipathy towards him may be understood as not just a reaction to his heretical views but also as a response to a figure who implicitly challenged those like Bābai himself, who had gone through the East-Syrian schools but afterward ascended to the monastery and held to a progressive view of learning.[228] His open acceptance of the higher levels of Evagrian contemplation would have threatened to make the monastery superfluous. Perhaps the content of the controversy is less important than the relative institutional positions of those involved. It is clear that just as the independence of the head of the School of Nisibis was a threat to the authority of the bishop of the city, so also it seems that the head of the local monastic center deemed himself worthy of more respect than the head of the School received. In other words, the School of Nisibis was an East-Syrian school that had grown too influential, and the ideological aspect of this would be its head promoting an Evagrian spirituality that allowed for too easy access to the divine too early in a student's career. However, this is speculative. The sources suggest that the primary reason for the problems at the School and within the Church as a whole at this time was theological.

Whether or not the decline of the School was directly related to the controversy surrounding Ḥĕnānā, it is certain that the controversy was related to larger movements within the Church of the East connected to the development of scholastic culture and the proliferation of East-Syrian schools. It does not seem to be a coincidence that most of the problems attributed to Ḥĕnānā represent the influx of new ideas into the Church of the East—West-Syrian theology, alternative forms of exegesis, and an Evagrian emphasis on divine accessibility, which was labeled Origenism. As we have seen, Syriac Christianity thrived, as all cultures do, from the influx of new ideas and practices. Yet, as is also the case with other cultures, the rapid introduction of the novel may have induced

intellectual and social destabilization, which would have led to cleavages from within.

Further analysis of the sources might draw out the texture of these events. However, we may be facing a source problem. Whatever the cause, the School of Nisibis seems to have gone into decline by the mid-seventh century. But the silence of the sources allows us only to speculate. Whether the School as an institution persisted or not, Nisibis remained an intellectual center for centuries to come.[229] The decline of the School does not seem to have had a significant impact on intellectual life in the Church of the East. This is because, as we saw in Chapter Eight, East-Syrian schools had popped up all over Mesopotamia, able to continue the way of life that had begun at Nisibis.

# Conclusion: Study as Ritual in the Church of the East

We have to put aside the conception of school learning as primarily the transmission of knowledge: lecturing, note-taking, book-learning, the generating of understanding, the cultivation of critical thought. Studying the "scholarly," "intellectual" side of cathedral school learning is like writing history of the theater from lists of plays performed and from theoretical treatises by actors.[1]

Now at that time the much enlightened Rabban Bābai
Was praised by many on account of his teaching.
In the city Gĕbīltā the teacher of truth founded a school,
And like the Tigris a fountain of learning flowed from his belly.
By the theory and practice of his teaching (*b-tĕ'āwrīyā w-sā'ŏrūtā d-mallphānūtēh*)
He made the truth of his enlightenment shine upon many.[2]

In this book I have sketched out some of the contours of the religious culture of learning in the Church of the East in Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period, primarily by focusing on the intellectual and institutional history of the School of Nisibis. In contrast to an approach that tends to subordinate learning to a secular, Enlightenment view of knowledge, I have emphasized that the East-Syrian school movement must be understood as a movement integral to the Church of the East in general and to East-Syrian monasticism in particular. More work needs to be done on the School of Nisibis and on the development of the East-Syrian school movement in general. There are numerous areas in which continued study would be fruitful, such as philosophical culture in the Sasanian Empire, the conflict between East and West Syrians in Mesopotamia, the Armenian sources for the intellectual culture of fifth-century Edessa, and the nature of the cause genre. Beyond these particular areas of future research, scholars must examine the similarities between the East-Syrian school movement and the cultures of learning we find in the Rabbinic, Zoroastrian, Mandaean, and Muslim communities neighboring it.

As the above epigraph from C. Stephen Jaeger suggests, the East-Syrian school will be misunderstood if it is simply treated as an intellectual institution where students acquired learning. Just as the focus of

medieval cathedral schools was on both "letters and manners" (*litterae et mores*),[3] so learning was not simply an intellectual act for the East Syrians. It was an embodied practice. Several texts composed in the later sixth and early seventh centuries, when the School of Nisibis was at its height, demonstrate an awareness of study as more than just mental activity, that the means of learning was as significant as the content.

At one point in the *Ecclesiastical History* Barḥadbĕšabbā fully fuses Narsai's study practice with his asceticism.

> He would then take a simple nourishment regularly of one meal, and again he would do this at evening time, or once every two days. His bed was a mat of reed and palm, his bedding a patched cloak. He would work wholly in meditation upon the liturgy and meditation on the scriptures, not giving place for sleep to fall upon him (lit. his sides), but upon a common seat he would drive sleep from his brow (lit. eyebrows), and if it happened that he was conquered to slumber from his vigil, either he would stand and walk or he would place in his nostrils materials which excite and awake, like spicy and sour things, or hot or pleasing things, or he would lay a tome upon his face and in this way he would sleep upon his seat (*mawtbā*). Often the tome would be the cause of waking him, since it would tip from its weight[4] (and fall) from his face to his hands. The holy man demonstrated all this diligence so that while he was fleshly and mortal he emulated the deeds of the angels.[5]

Imitation of the angels in late antique texts often means ceaseless worship of God. Just as the sleepless angels stand continually before God, so the ascetic often aimed to worship his or her Creator without rest. However, the "deeds of the angels" in this case are also illustrated by the passage from the *Cause* which received close attention in Chapters Six and Seven (*Cause* 348.4–13). The passage depicts the creation narrative of Genesis 1 as a classroom with God as the teacher and the angels as the first students. Narsai's imitation of the angels may be taken as a reference to his academic practice. Yet this scholastic version of imitating the angels does not exclude its usual referent: the ceaseless worship of God which the angels perform in heaven. Narsai's vigilance—in the literal sense of the word—is reminiscent of that of the sleepless angels in heaven (and the famous sleepless monks of Constantinople). In this anecdote worship and study cannot be easily distinguished, just as in the life at the School of Nisibis study and liturgy were not distinct categories.

The embodied nature of the transmission of textual knowledge, which we see in the case of Narsai, is also an issue of social differentiation, as we find in the *Life of Īšō'sabran*, which was composed by Catholicos Īšō'yahb III (647/50–57/8), sometime after Īšō'sabran's death as a martyr in 620.[6] In the *Life*, Īšō'sabran, a Zoroastrian, is baptized a Christian and must leave his hometown due to the persecution that ensues. He travels in the wilderness, learning from ascetic holy men and performing miracles, and eventually decides that as a Christian he needs to learn

how to read scripture. He adopts the son of a local village priest so that the boy might teach him, explaining that up to this point he could recite from memory only the first ten Psalms. When Īšō'sabran asks about the correct order of learning, the boy gives a response which should seem familiar by now to those who have read this book: "A human being first learns the alphabet (lit. letters), then the pronunciation of them, and after that he repeats the Psalms. Little by little he reads from all of the scriptures. When he is trained in the reading of the scriptures, then he proceeds to their interpretation."[7] Īšō'sabran then asks the youth to recite scriptural verses so that he can learn them orally. Īšō'yahb, the author of the text, explains that this request is in accordance with the Zoroastrian practice of orally transmitting religious knowledge, "because he was accustomed to take from the mouth the murmuring of Magianism—for the accursed learning of Zoroaster is not written in letters of speech (*ātwātā da-mlīlūtā*)." The youth complies, and when Īšō'sabran "received a verse, he worked with industry, while moving his neck in the likeness of the Magi." The youth restrains him, saying, "Do not do as the Magi do, but rather while you are at peace speak solely with your mouth."

This passage provides a clear example of "how the production of ritualized agents is a strategy for the construction of particular relationships of power effective in particular social situations,"[8] and shows how the human body is the fundamental site of ritualization.[9] Īšō'sabran's gaucherie would be comparable to a modern convert from Evangelical Christianity to Judaism who raises his hand up to witness in the middle of the Amidah part of the synagogue service or a Muslim convert to Christianity prostrating on the floor prior to receiving the Eucharist. The ritualization—or rather scholasticizing—of the body that we have seen in these two texts led to a particular deportment and style, the kind that impressed Mār Abā, as described in Chapter One.

A holistic view that takes into account both the intellectual and the performative, practical, and embodied aspects of life at the East-Syrian school can be applied to our analysis of the *Cause* itself. My approach throughout much of this volume has been to use the *Cause*, a text containing striking pedagogical imagery, as a point of access to the texture and nature of life at the School of Nisibis. The *Cause* has been especially useful because it contains an abundance of historical data and bears the traces of the intellectual history of the School in the sixth century. Aside from being a useful repository of information about the School, it can be compared to numerous other texts from Late Antiquity that promote a rewritten version of history and emphasize certain aspects of a group's communal identity.

However, the text itself may also be understood as an active agent in the School's history, in that it played a key role in the process of forming

the students required for the School to maintain itself. If we accept the pretexts of its genre and the speaker's characterization of himself and his audience, we may examine the *Cause*'s original function as a speech welcoming the incoming students to the School of Nisibis and introducing them to the ideas and way of life of the School. In other words, the text, a product and reflection of life at the School, served to propagate that form of life.

Aside from the proem, the *Cause* begins and ends with an address to the students. The majority of the text consists of a discussion on how human beings are able to know God and of a long narrative description of the history of human "schools" running from that of Adam to the contemporary head of the School of Nisibis. The text relies on the pedagogical understanding of Christianity that the students would have brought with them to the School in order to introduce them to a more complex pedagogical theology and anthropology, which they would internalize while in attendance there. The long succession of "schools" described by the text would allow the student to see how his actions fit into the history of the world and the cosmic order. The students are invited to take part in this chain of transmission when they are asked to maintain the canons of the School and pass them on to those after them.[10]

Analyzing the *Cause* by examining its function as an instrument for instilling a certain scholastic ideology and practice allows us to view it as something more than a static repository of information. The flattening of history into the mythic repetition of the foundation of the "schools" and of the transferral from one generation to the next of their leadership reflects a scholasticized form of the fundamental Christian myth as understood by Theodore of Mopsuestia. Human existence, individually and collectively, serves as a training ground for the created to recognize the Creator.

Recent scholarship on Christianization in Late Antiquity has focused on the slow and steady process by which the laity were Christianized through the iterative warning and encouragement of homiletics.[11] We might look at the *Cause* in a similar way. Its audience perhaps had heard similar speeches before and would certainly hear more once they had become part of the School. However, instead of being aimed at eradicating "magical," "pagan," and "Jewish" practices, the *Cause* constituted part of a project to create and maintain a notion of the scholastic way of life. In other words, it may be understood as an intellectual catechesis for life among the brothers in the School.

The immediate connections and abrupt discontinuities between classical philosophy and the culture of the East-Syrian school movement are apparent in the East-Syrian appropriation of Greek philosophical literature. However, an intellectual-literary approach, that is, an examination

merely of literary genre and intellectual content, provides only a limited realm of overlap between these two different cultural institutions. Following the holistic approach to Greek philosophy of Pierre Hadot, we might step back from a simple understanding of philosophy as the content of a particular intellectual exercise and rather take "Philosophy as a Way of Life."[12] Hadot's project in several of his works has been to transcend the various differences between the philosophical schools in antiquity and demonstrate how focusing solely on the intellectual and doctrinal content of ancient philosophy causes us to miss its very defining characteristic: i.e., that it was a way of life inseparable from philosophical discourse.

Christianity appropriated this "Way of Life" and its concomitant discourse (in the limited sense of the term), often wholesale. For example, a simple reading of Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* or Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On Virginity* shows how Christians easily adapted the philosophico-erotic system established by Plato in the *Symposium.* In his most recent book Hadot discusses this linking of *eros* and philosophy in the *Symposium* as a foundation point in Western thought.[13] Thus philosophy as a way of life continued long after the philosophers had disappeared. Furthermore, Hadot has emphasized the many continuities between Greek and Christian philosophy.[14]

> Yet although some Christian authors might present Christianity as a philosophy, or even as *the* philosophy, this was not so much because Christianity proposed an exegesis and a theology analogous to pagan exegesis and theology, but because it was a style of life and mode of being, just as ancient philosophy was.[15]

The Christian philosophical way of life is most commonly known from the intentional community of the monastery, where men and women attempted to live their lives with the same focus on the divine that the angels have in heaven. However, just as the angelic life was imitated by monks, so also was it imitated by students in the School, who would have seen how in the *Cause* the angels who studied hard serve God in heaven.[16] Similarly, students who performed well in the School would serve God on earth within the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The *Cause* naturalizes life within the School by cosmicizing the practices of learning that occurred there. The interpretation of scripture, the core intellectual practice of the School, is understood as being analogous to the natural theology promoted by the text.[17] Thus scriptural interpretation is naturalized to serve the task of discerning the Creator in the revealed text of nature. Furthermore, as biblical and early Christian figures are scholasticized in the text, so also is the audience assimilated to these figures in all their importance and holiness.

The experience of the School, the deportment of its teachers, and its very location and space would have made the "scholastic" version of

history—what seems to us the hyberbolic violence of bad metaphors—intellectually and socially acceptable. The reality of the School's existence would have confirmed for students and teachers alike the historicity of its mythic background, and yet at the same time it is this mythic background's continuity with the contemporary experience of the School that would have established the School itself as part of the order of things.

The regularities and anomalies of our lives make our myths palatable, but our religious practices make them real. In the case of the School of Nisibis study seems to have been a form of religious practice that rendered true the history and cosmology provided by the *Cause*. As I have tried to emphasize in this project, a more holistic approach to intellectual practice, as well as a notion of religious study as a form of ritual, may help us to understand the relationship between the *Cause* and the life of the School. A notion of study as a form of ritual has only begun to be developed in the study of early Christianity. For example, some time ago, in *Study as Worship: Aboth and the New Testament*, Benedict Thomas Viviano attempted to analyze "the religious value of study of Scripture and the postbiblical tradition."[18] Although Viviano was certainly not the first to note the central role that study plays in the religious life of the Jewish male within classical (i.e., rabbinic) Judaism,[19] his work was original in that it provided a close examination of the ideology of study in Mishnah *Avot* and its background development. However, Viviano's approach falls short in that it looks at study only as a religious duty, a duty equivalent to prayer, but not as a ritual act similar to prayer in its significance as embodied practice.

As the heirs of Descartes, we tend to see intellectual activity as impractical in the literal sense of the word, that is, as something distinct from real action within the world, something mental in contrast to the physical, tangible world of "real" things. In the previous chapters I criticized the scholarly tendency to understand ancient schools as merely earlier versions of our own similarly named institutions. Likewise, by projecting our own (mis)understanding of intellectual activity onto these institutions we fail to recognize the embodied practice and embodied experience of the ancient school. Study at the School of Nisibis was not mere intellectual activity, but rather an opportunity to "strip off the old man with all of his ways" and to "put on the new man who through knowledge is renewed in the likeness of his Creator (cf. Eph 4:22–24)."[20]

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# Notes

*Preface*

1. See comments on the past deficiencies of Syriac church history, Baum and Winkler, *Church of the East*, 2–3.

2. For a discussion of recent history, see ibid. 135–57 and Aziz S. Atiya, *A History of Eastern Christianity* (Milbank, N.J.: Kraus, 1980), 277–88.

*Introduction*

1. The colophon to British Library Add. 14471 at 108a; LXXVII in Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, I: 53–4; Wright takes the name as "Basha" (i.e., Baššā). However, see also Fiey, *Nisibe*, 62, which reads it as "Qaššā." The letters Bēt and Qōph resemble one another in form. If Fiey's reading of "Qaššā" is accurate, he may be the same person as the "reader" mentioned in the canons of the School of Nisibis from 590, see *Statutes*, 92 and VHSN 282.

2. For the various Gabriels from Bēt Qaṭrāyē, see Brock, "Syriac Writers from Beth Qatraye," 89–92. As Brock notes, Bēt Qaṭrāyē refers to the region around and including modern Qatar.

3. On Christians in Qatar in this period, see John F. Healey, "The Christians of Qatar in the 7th Century A.D.," in *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. 1, *Hunter of the East: Arabic and Semitic Studies*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 222–37.

4. For a formal chronological history of the School of Nisibis, working through its series of head exegetes, their works, as well as their students, the reader is directed to the standard work, VHSN. See also Chabot, "L'École de Nisibe, son histoire, ses statuts," and more recently, Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth'." For other early bibliography, see the works cited in VHSN, and the brief history of scholarship in Adam H. Becker, "Devotional Study: The School of Nisibis and the Development of 'Scholastic' Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia" (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 2004), 32–44.

5. For discussion of the dates of the office of the different heads of the School, see Vööbus's discussion of chronology in VHSN as well as the handy compilation of Vööbus's results at Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšōʿ*, 69.

6. For a general account of the problems at the School under Ḥĕnānā, see VHSN 299–317. A more recent treatment is offered at Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšōʿ*, 31–39, esp. 31–34.

7. See, e.g., *Statutes,* 65.

8. The Trinitarian statement in the colophon, "one nature, three persons," can be found in the synodal statements from the fifth century onwards. "Persons" is not a wholly accurate translation of *qnōmē.* See Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," esp. 130–31.

9. See, for example, Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest,* 349–51.

10. For a lachrymose description of these events, see TMBG I: 51.7–12 (Syriac), II: 89–90 (English).

11. For an accessible general background, see McCullough, *Short History of Syriac Christianity,* 159.

12. Paul Bedjan, ed., *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha et trois autres patriarches, d'un prêtre et deux laïques nestoriens* (Paris/Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1895), 416–571 (*Life of George*). See also Reinink, "Babai the Great's Life of George."

13. BGSL 221–22; de Halleux, "Martyrios-Sahdona"; idem, "La christologie de Martyrius-Sahdona dans l'évolution du nestorianisme." See also de Halleux's introductory comments at Martyrius, *Writings,* i–xviii (CSCO 201, 1960).

14. John of Fenek, the East-Syrian historian whose work belongs to the contemporary resurgence in apocalypticism, addresses events of the seventh century. See the introductory comments in Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century."

15. On the Christian theological response to these events, see, for example, David Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 116–37.

16. On Christians in the Sasanian capital and the various related place names including Māḥōzē and al-Madā'in, see Fiey, "Topographie chrétienne de Mahozé."

17. Brock, "Syriac Writers from Beth Qatraye," 92. The connection between Gabriel and Ḥĕnānīšō' is mentioned by Scher, "Étude supplémentaire sur les écrivains syriens orientaux," 18. See also BGSL 200.

18. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 154 (chapter 82, on Ḥĕnānīšō').

19. Brock, "Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy."

20. In general, see, e.g., Gerhard Endress, "Philosophie und Wissenschaften bei den Syrern," in *Grundriss der arabischen Philologie* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1987), II. 407–12; Henri Hugonnard-Roche, "Contributions syriaques aux études arabes de logique à l'époque abbasside," *Aram* 3 (1991): 193–210; idem, "L'intermédiaire syriaque dans la transmission de la philosophie grecque à l'arabe: le cas de l'Organon d'Aristote," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 1 (1991): 187–209; Gérard Troupeau, "Le rôle des syriaques dans la transmission et l'exploitation du patrimoine philosophique et scientifique grec," *Arabica* 38 (1991): 1–10 (despite his views on fifth-century Edessa). For a general survey of Greek philosophy among Syriac authors (including a number of the problems I try to correct in this volume), see Ephrem-Isa Yousif, *Les Philosophes et traducteurs syriaques: d'Athènes à Bagdad* (Paris: Harmattan, 1997).

21. For the common recognition of these figures, see, e.g., Francis E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 57–65.

22. Most recently, see Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud,* for a study of life in the Babylonian Jewish *yeshivot.*

23. Few scholars have taken advantage of the Syriac material as comparanda for the study of rabbinic texts; cf. Burton L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 150–59.

24. On the ecclesiastical context of the material in the following study, see

Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 332–83; Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšōʿ*; and Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'Empire perse*, 197–287.

25. On the East-Syrian schools in general, see Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'Empire perse*, 288–301; Macina, "L'homme à l'école de Dieu"; and Paolo Bettiolo, "Scuole e ambienti intellettuali nelle chiese di Siria," in *Storia della filosofia nell'Islam medievale*, ed. Cristina D'Ancona (Turin: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi, 2005), vol. 1.

26. See discussion of the question of authorship in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*, Introduction.

27. For an outline of this system, see Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, esp. Chapters I.7; II.1, 6, 7, 10, Conclusion; III.4, 5, 6. Since Marrou, the main addition has been the publication of the papyri; see Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996). Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), combines Cribiore's work with the notion of social class introduced by Robert Kaster, *Guardians of Language*. For Cribiore's own synthesis of this material, see Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001). For suggestions as to why a new form of Christian education was not developed to replace ancient *Paideia*, see Edgar Pack, "Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte des Fehlens einer 'christliche' Schule in der römischen Kaiserzeit," in *Religion und Gesellschaft in der römischer Kaiserzeit*, ed. Werner Eck (Köln: Böhlau, 1989), 185–263.

28. On education and class, see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 15–31. On the continuity of ancient education in the West, see Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*. "So, if classical education had developed its own admirable technique for producing a perfectly developed type of human being, what point was there in looking elsewhere for some other kind of education?" Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, 391. On Byzantine developments, see Margaret Mullett and Roger Scott, eds., *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition: University of Birmingham Thirteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies 1979: In Conjunction with the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Classical Association* (Birmingham: Center for Byzantine Studies, University of Birmingham, 1981).

29. On the intentional development of Christian "classics," see Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* III.16, ed. W. Bright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893) and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* V.18, ed. A. J. Festugière et al., SC 306 (Paris: Cerf, 1983), as well as Jerome's stated aims in the prologue to *De Viris Illustribus*, ed. E. C. Richardson (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1896). On Julian's ban on Christian teachers, see *Codex Theodosianus*, XIII.3.5 dated to June 17, 362, ed. Theodor Mommsen (Hildesheim: Weidmann, 1990) and Julian, *Epistle* LXI, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. J. Bidez and F. Cumont (Paris: Budé, 1924), I.2: *Lettres et fragments*, 72–75).

30. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* IV.107–8, *Discours*, ed. J. Bernardi (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 4:258–62: his defense of Hellenism and poetry as not solely pagan. See Polymnia Athanassiadi, *Julian, An Intellectual Biography* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1–2, 9–10. The tension that some Christian elites felt is best attested in Jerome's famous dream of being taken before a heavenly tribunal and accused of being a "Ciceronian" and not a Christian. *Epistle* 22.30, *Correspondence*, ed. J. Labourt, (Paris: Budé, 1949),1:144–46.

31. Glen W. Bowersock, "Nonnos Rising," *Topoi* 4/1 (1994), repr. in *Selected Papers on Late Antiquity* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2000), 96.

32. On Synesius, see Jay Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher-Bishop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). See Bregman's summary of the different scholarly explanations of how the philosopher and bishop relate in this one figure, which culminates in Bregman's concluding "that Synesius was primarily a philosopher" (182).

33. Augustine secularizes much classical learning—see Peter R. L. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 267–68, 411, for Augustine's assumption that classical education would continue—while Basil of Caesarea subjects it to Christianity as a propaideutic; see Basil, *Aux jeunes gens sur la manière de tirer profit des lettres helléniques*, ed. and trans. Fernand Boulenger (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1935). Even the arguments used to justify classical learning were taken from a stockpile of older arguments: for example, an argument based upon utility or the idea of poetry as propaideutic are classical and can be found in works such as Plutarch's *De Audiendis Poetis*, ed. Ernesto Valgiglio (Turin: Loescher 1973).

34. The bibliography on the so-called School of Alexandria is large; more recently see R. Van den Broek, "The Christian 'School' of Alexandria in the Second and Third Centuries," in *Centres of Learning*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and MacDonald, 39–47. "They were in fact charismatic didaskaloi, not holders of academic chairs, incorporated in a school with a fixed curriculum," ibid. 43.

35. The literacy rate in antiquity was at a constant low. See William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); for the later debate around his conclusions, see Mary Beard et al., "Literacy in the Roman World," *Journal of Roman Archaeology, supp. ser.* 3 (Dept. of Classical Studies, University of Michigan, 1991).

36. See, e.g., Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 33–75. On the transformation that occurred in how scripture was read, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

37. His earlier statements are in *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1938). He takes this back in his *Retractatio* in the next edition (1958) and in the *History of Education in Antiquity* (1st French ed. 1948).

38. Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West*, 177–265, 404–15.

39. Peter Heather, "Literacy and Power in the Migration Period," in Bowman and Woolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, 177–197, 237–240.

40. *Sermo* 99, *Sermons sur l'écriture*, ed. G. Morin and Joël Courreau (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 310–21. This sermon depends heavily on Origen's fourth homily on Exodus, thus showing that the same statement in a different context has a different meaning. The philosopher Origen's critique of learning functions differently from that of the inelegant Caesarius. Similarly, in his *Life* Caesarius is attacked by the serpent of secular learning in a dream (I.9, PL 67, col. 1005); this could be compared to Jerome's guilt-ridden dream in *Epistle* 22. Again, similar content means something different in a different context.

41. Kaster, "Notes on 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Schools in Late Antiquity," argues it was minimal; in any case, there was nothing comparable to modern education.

42. See Peter R. L. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 35–70.

43. This phenomenon may be comparable to the very slow disappearance of Egyptian religion discussed in Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*. Frankfurter shows how what had previously looked to scholars like the complete collapse of

the ancient Egyptian religious system was in fact a cultic decentralization. Similarly, although the empire was gone, aristocrats continued to read Cicero and Virgil in their villas.

44. For Cassiodorus in general, see J. J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), but on O'Donnell's treatment, see Averil Cameron, "Cassiodorus Deflated," *Journal of Roman Studies* 71 (1981): 183–86. See also S. J. B. Barnisch, "The Work of Cassiodorus After His Conversion," *Latomus* 48 (1989): 157–87, and the new translation by James W. Halporn, Cassiodorus, *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and "On the Soul"* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2004), which includes an important discussion by Mark Vessey on the purpose and reception of Cassiodorus's project. Furthermore, while it is true that Cassiodorus was aware of the School of Nisibis and cites it at the introduction to this work, his knowledge seems to be secondhand, perhaps via Junillus Africanus's *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis.*

45. PL 70, 1105D.

46. For a general introduction to intellectual life and learning in Bede's day, see Peter Hunter Blair, *The World of Bede* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 197–309. For a discussion of Bede, Cassiodorus, and the discontinuity between the two, see Paul Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 827–83. See also Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: "Grammatica" and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Antonino Isola, "*Il De Schematibus et Tropis* de Beda in rapporto al *De Doctrina Christiana* di Agostino," *Romanobarbarica* 1 (1976): 71–82; George Hardin Brown, *Bede the Venerable* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 24–41.

47. On Theodore of Tarsus, see the collection of essays in Michael Lapidge, ed., *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on His Life and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 30–53: Sebastian Brock, "The Syriac Background to the World of Theodore of Tarsus" (repr. in Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos*).

48. On Aḥiqar, see, e.g., James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar / Ahikar Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), who suggests this tradition of Aramaean wisdom be set next to those of Israel, Mesopotamia, and Egypt (25). For a collection of early Syriac inscriptions and documents on skin, see *Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene.*

49. For example, if British Library Add 14658 were not extant, or if Moses of Nisibis had not deposited numerous Syriac manuscripts at the Monastery of the Syrians (Deir al-Surian) in Wadi al-Natrun in the early tenth century, our knowledge of early Syriac Christianity would be far more limited; see J. Leroy, "Moise de Nisibe," in *Symposium Syriacum I,* 457–70.

50. On the Peshitta, see the excellent in-depth introduction of Weitzman, *Syriac Version of the Old Testament.*

51. Palmyrene grave inscription from South Shields, Northumbria, in D. R. Hillers and E. Cussini, eds., *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 54 (PAT 0246 [C3901]).

52. For a general discussion of ancient scribes, see Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures,* 15–36. Much relevant material can also be found in Gammie and Perdue, eds., *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East.*

53. In the late fourth century, Protogenes, a presbyter from Edessa, "who had received a good education and was practised in rapid writing," was exiled under Valens to Egypt and "pitched on a suitable spot which he made into a boys' school, and, setting up for a schoolmaster, he instructed his pupils not only in the art of swift penmanship, but also in the divine oracles. He taught them the

psalms of David and gave them to learn the most important articles of the apostolic doctrine." Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4:15 (trans. NPNF Series II Volume III, 118).

54. For the dialogue, see Bardaiṣan, *"The Book of the Laws of the Countries" or "Dialogue on Fate"*. For Bardaiṣan, see H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaiṣan of Edessa*. The *Letter of Mara bar Sarapion* may be another example of an early piece of secular Syriac literature engaged with classical models. However, McVey has argued that it is post-Constantinian and Christian on account of its brand of anti-Judaism, see Kathleen McVey, "A Fresh Look at the Letter of Mara bar Sarapion," in *Symposium Syriacum V*, 257–72.

55. For most of these mosaics see the reproductions in Segal, *Edessa*, and *Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene*. Some of these images may suggest a Greek literary background, for example, the floor mosaic in which "Zeus supervises the action of Hermes who puts life (the female figure of Psyche) into the *protoplastos*, bringing the inert figures of men to life" (*Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene*, 220 and plate 72). For other scenes from pagan mythology with Syriac inscriptions, J. Balty and F. Briquel-Chatonnet, "Nouvelles mosaïques inscrites d'Osrhoène," *Monuments et mémoires* 79 (2000)): 31–72.

56. Segal, *Edessa*, 29–38; Ross, *Roman Edessa*, 83–116. For an assessment of the early material, though a bit pessimistic, see Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 472–88; on the story of Abgar's conversion, begin with Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity"; William Adler has of late been reassessing the work of Sextus Julius Africanus, who provides a description of early third-century Edessa and its royal court. See his recent "Sextus Julius Africanus and the Roman Near East in the 3rd Century C.E.," JTS 55 (2004): 520–50.

57. For a general introduction and translation of his works, see Peter Bruns's edition, Aphrahat, *Unterweisungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991) and that of Marie-Joseph Pierre, Aphraate, le sage persan, *Les exposés*, SC 349, 359 (Paris: Cerf, 1988–89). The first full English translation of Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* is that of Kuriakose A. Valavanolickal, Afrahat, *Demonstrations* (vol. 1; Catholic Theological Studies of India 3; Changanassery: Higher Institute of Religious Studies, 1999); the second volume is forthcoming in 2005. Adam Lehto's translation of the *Demonstrations* waits publication.

58. Paul S. Russell will argue that it is more fruitful to study Ephrem in his Nisibene context, in contrast to the usual scholarly practice of focusing primarily on Edessa as the literary context; Paul S. Russell, *A Companion to the Study of St. Ephrem the Syrian* (forthcoming).

59. For the most recent work on this aspect of Bardaiṣan's work, see Kathleen McVey, "Were the Earliest *Madrashe* Songs or Recitations," in Reinink and Klugkist, eds., *After Bardaisan*, 185–99.

60. In general, see Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2nd ed. revised and expanded (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). Examples of Manichean poetry can be found in several anthologies, including Jes Peter Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature* (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1975).

61. I use the term *pace* Bowersock's critique of it and his suggestion that we rely on the emic term "Hellenism," Glen W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), xi.

62. Possekel, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian*.

63. On the opposition between Greek and Semitic (Syriac), see also Adam H.

Becker, "Doctoring the Past in the Present: E. A. Wallis Budge, the Discourse on Magic, and the Colonization of Iraq," *History of Religions* 44, 3 (2005): 175–215, esp. 195–99.

64. Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments*, ed. and trans. M. Whittaker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1.1–2.17.

65. For example, all of the following have had both Syriac and Greek suggested as their original language: Acts of Thomas, Odes of Solomon, the *Letter of Mara bar Sarapion*, Bardaiṣan's *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, Eusebius's version of the Abgar story in the *Ecclesiastical History* (I.13), Gospel of Thomas (extant only in Coptic), and the Diatesseron. See discussions in Brock, "Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria," and D. G. K. Taylor, "Bilingualism and Diglossia in Late Antique Syria and Mesopotamia" in *Bilingualism in Ancient Society*, ed. J. N. Adams, M. Janse, and S. Swain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 298–331.

66. J. F. Healey, "A New Syriac Mosaic Inscription," JSS (forthcoming). The original publication of the image and a reading of the text are Adam H. Becker and Michael Rand, *Christies Catalogue: Antiquities* (December 1999), 90, #388. For other Syriac mosaics with classical themes, see reproductions in Segal, *Edessa* and Ross, *Roman Edessa*.

67. Lucian, *Doubly Accused*, 27, *Opera*, ed. D. M. McLeod (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 2:107.

68. *Life of Rabbula*, 160.25–26 (Bedjan edition: 5: 397 lines 19–20).

69. Overbeck, ed., *Opera Selecta*, 239.5ff.

70. *Life of John of Tella*, 39.22. See the broader discussion of this text in Chapter One. Also, on this passage see Brock, "Greek and Syriac in Late Antique Syria," 156.

71. In general, see the brief summary of the Parthian and Sasanian Periods in the article "Education, ii. In the Parthian and Sasanian Periods," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982–), 8:179–80 and Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 134–38. On scribes see Ahmad Tafazzoli, *Sasanian Society* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000), 18–37.

72. On the aristocratic upbringing of Persian elites, see Walker, *Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, 121–62.

73. See Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire," and J. Rist, "Die Verfolgung der Christen im spätantiken Sasanidenreich: Ursachen, Verlauf und Folgen," OC 80 (1996): 17–42.

74. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 354–72. See also comments in Stephen Gero, "'Die Kirche des Ostens': Zum Christentum in Persien in der Spätantike," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 30 (1981): 22–27. This East-Syrian identity had to be continually maintained (e.g., Abraham of Kaškar's application of a new tonsure to distinguish East Syrians from West Syrians, the continuing production of polemical literature, or Mār Abā's marriage laws aimed against Zoroastrian practices; see Eduard Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1907–14), 3:255–58. There were always ambiguities: for example, the confusion of Mār Abā in the *Life* over whether someone is Christian, Marcionite, or Jew (*Life of Abā*, 213–14).

75. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 334–35; on centralization under Seleucia-Ctesiphon, see William Macomber, "The Authority of the Catholicos Patriarch of Seleucia-Ctesiphon," OCA 181 (1968): 179–200, and J.-M. Fiey, "Les étapes de la prise de conscience de son identité patriarcale par l'Église syrienne orientale," OS 12 (1967): 3–22. For some insights into the development of religious communities, particularly in the Sasanian realm, see Fowden, "Religious

Communities." See also Gernot Wiessner, "Christlicher Heiligenkult im Umkreis eines sassanidischen Grosskönigs," *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans*, ed. Wilhelm Eilers (Stuttgart: Hochwacht, 1971), 141–55. The East-Syrian accommodation to the Sasanian Empire is comparable to the similar politics of the West Syrians vis-à-vis Constantinople (See, e.g., the work of J. J. Van Ginkel, whose dissertation treats, among other things, John of Ephesus's relationship to the state, J. J. Van Ginkel, "John of Ephesus: A Monophysite Historian in Sixth Century Byzantium," dissertation, Rijksuniv., Gröningen, 1995).

76. E.g., Abramowski, "Babai der Grosse"; idem, "Die Christologie Babais des Grossen"; and Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great*, for the theology of the most significant figure in the Church in the early seventh century. See also Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East."

77. See, e.g., Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 361–64.

78. Lucas Van Rompay, "The Christian Syriac Tradition of Interpretation," *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation*, 1/1, ed. M. Saebo (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 612–41, esp. 632–37, though East-Syrian exegesis was not monolithic (p. 637), as the controversy around Ḥĕnānā of Adiabene demonstrates.

79. See, e.g., the canons of the synods held under the Catholicoi Abā and Joseph in 544 and 554 respectively, *Synodicon Orientale*, 306–54 (*Das Buch der Synhados*, 93–163); see also material in Eduard Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1907–14), vols. 2 and 3.

80. "According to its fundamental meaning, the term scholasticism is simply that system of thinking, teaching, and writing produced in the medieval schools." John W. Baldwin, *The Scholastic Culture of the Middle Ages, 1000–1300* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1971), 6.

81. José Ignazio Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); idem, *Scholasticism: Cross-Cultural and Comparative Perspectives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 1–17.

82. Ibid., 4–6.

83. On secular learning, see Conrad, "Varietas Syriaca"; an example can be seen in the secular studies that we find in monasteries such as Qenneshrin. See more recently John W. Watt, "A Portrait of John Bar Aphtonia, Founder of the Monastery of Qennesre," in Drijvers and Watt, eds., *Portraits of Spiritual Authority*, 155–69. Also, Sebastian Brock, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnus Mythological Scholia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), which is West-Syrian material from the sixth and early seventh centuries.

84. A. C. Lloyd, "The Later Neoplatonists," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 280.

85. Becker, "Bringing the Heavenly Academy down to Earth," 185–90.

86. On the Jewish usage, Elias Bi[c]kerman[n], "La chaîne de la tradition pharisienne," remains a good place to start. For the creation of a fictional transmission of philosophy from Alexandria to Baghdad in the Muslim sources, see Gotthard Strohmaier, "'Von Alexandrien nach Baghdad'—eine fiktive Schultradition," in *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet*, ed. J. Wiesner (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1987), 1:380–89, and Joep Lameer, "From Alexandria to Baghdad: Reflections on the Genesis of a Problematical Tradition," in *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, ed. Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (Leiden: Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, 1997), 181–91. More recently, see Dimitri Gutas, "The Alexandria to Baghdad Complex

of Narratives," in *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 10 (1999): 155–93.

87. For more on this issue, see Becker, "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*," 387–91.

88. Cf. *Cause* 327. 2

89. Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3 (Pref. 4).

90. See also Ulrich Duchrow, "Zum Prolog von Augustins 'De Doctrina Christiana,'" VC 17 (1963): 165–72.

91. For another example of a theological difference based upom different philosophical presuppositions, see Ernest L. Fortin, *Christianisme et culture philosophique au cinquième siècle: La querelle de l'âme humaine en Occident* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1959), which treats Claudianus Mamertus (c. 425–74), Augustine's disciple who was also well trained in the writings of the Neoplatonists, and his differences with Faustus of Riez (d. c. 490).

92. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity*, 149–81.

93. Daniel Boyarin, *Borderlines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 156.

94. Ibid. 152.

95. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity*, 217.

96. See, e.g., the brief reference to a comment made by al-Fārābī at Cristina D'Ancona Costa, "Commenting on Aristotle: From Late Antiquity to the Arab Aristotelianism," in *Der Kommentar in Antike und Mittelalter: Beiträge zu seiner Erforschung*, ed. Wilhelm Geerlings and Christian Schulze (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 229. Note how the Syriac Christians can be simply passed over in such a discussion. See also the thin discussion of the "schools" at Cristina D'Ancona, "Greek into Arabic: Neoplatonism in translation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18–20.

97. See Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*. Despite his downplaying of the role of Syriac Christians in the translation process (which is no doubt merely an overcompensation for the previous scholarly diachronic focus), Gutas's work has inspired my own focus on the synchronic, the momentary, and the discontinuous in the history of reception.

98. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Patriarchs and Scholarchs," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 48 (1981): 85, n. 69. The School of Nisibis appears in the debate between Isaiah Gafni and David Goodblatt over the development of the Babylonian Rabbinic academies. This debate was summarized in R. S. Chapin, "Mesopotamian Scholasticism: A Comparison of the Jewish and Christian Schools (thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1990) and more recently in Rubenstein, "The Rise of the Babylonian Rabbinic Academy." Rubenstein has included a brief section on East-Syrian scholasticism in *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 35–38.

99. For these issues, see Becker's and Reed's comments in *The Ways That Never Parted*, 1–24, as well as other articles in the same volume.

100. For my own work on Syriac material with these issues in mind, see Adam H. Becker, "Anti-Judaism and Care of the Poor in Aphrahat's *Demonstration* 20," JECS 10,3 (2002): 305–27; idem, "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*"; and idem, "Bringing the Heavenly Academy down to Earth."

101. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1978, 1985, 1986) and Daniel Boyarin and Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Introduction: Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*: The Fourth Volume, or, A Field Left Fallow for Others to Till," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, 3–4 (2001): 357–74.

102. Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995), 17.

103. Most recently, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

*Chapter 1. Divine Pedagogy and the Transmission of the Knowledge of God*

1. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 36.

2. On this theme in East-Syrian school literature, see also Bettiolo, "Scuola ed Economia Divina nella Catechesi della Chiesa di Persia," esp. 152–54, and Macina, "L'homme à l'école de Dieu," 33: 39–52, esp. 44–49.

3. Elsewhere I have discussed the complex relationship between East-Syrian institutions and the projection of those institutions into heaven (Becker, "Bringing the Heavenly Academy down to Earth").

4. Examples abound: for family and ethnic relations, see Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); see also idem, "Race and Universalism in Early Christianity," JECS 10, 4 (2002): 429–68; for Christianity as family, see Michael Penn, "Performing Family: Ritual Kissing and the Construction of Early Christian Kinship," JECS 10, 2 (2002): 151–74; bibliography on the Christian appropriation of Jewish and Israelite history can be found in the large corpus of secondary literature on early Christian anti-Judaism. Merely note the title of the classic book in the field: Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (trans. H. Keating; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

5. *Life* 10. See Josephus's three discussions of the different "schools" of Judaism in his *Life* 10–12, the *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.12–20, and *Jewish War* 2.119–66, *Opera Omnia*, ed. S. A. Naber (Leipzig: Teubner, 1888–1896), vols. 4, 4, 5 respectively. For first-century Judaism and early Christianity, see Steve Mason, "*Philosophiai*: Graeco-Roman, Judean, and Christian," in Kloppenberg and Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 31–58. For Philo, see David Runia, "Philo of Alexandria and the Greek Hairesis-Model," VC 53, 2 (1999): 117–47.

6. For a recent discussion, see Thomas A. Wayment, "Christian Teachers in Matthew and Thomas: The Possibility of Becoming a 'Master,'" JECS 12 (2004): 289–311.

7. *De Opificio Mundi* 149, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, *Philo*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 226 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 119.

8. Much has been written on the history of the word "haíresis." Cf. Le Boulluec, *La notion de l'hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe–IIIe siècle.* Though somewhat out of date, Michel R. Desjardins, "Bauer and Beyond: On Recent Scholarly Discussions of *Hairesis* in the Early Christian Era," *Second Century* 8 (1991): 65–82, is a good review article on some of the scholarship.

9. There are several works with this or a similar title, e.g., the *Didache* or the *Didascalia Apostolorum.* See also the Syriac text, the *Teaching of the Apostles*, in *Ancient Syriac Documents*, ed. William Cureton (London 1864; repr. Amsterdam: Oriental Press, 1967), 24–35; cf. Witold Witakowski, "The Origin of the 'Teaching of the Apostles,'" in *Symposium Syriacum IV*, 161–71.

10. Again the bibliography is large. For more recent articles, see J. L. Kovacs, "Divine Pedagogy and the Gnostic Teacher According to Clement of Alexandria," JECS 9,1 (2001): 3–25 and J. W. Trigg, "God's Marvelous *Oikonomia*: Reflections

of Origen's Understanding of Divine and Human Pedagogy in the *Address* Ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus," JECS 9,1 (2001): 27–52.

11. See, e.g., the Gospel of Truth (19.17–20), which describes Jesus as a teacher: "He became a guide (lit. paedagogue), at peace and occupied with classrooms. He came forward and uttered the word as a teacher," trans. B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 254.

12. Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*, 58–75.

13. Note the Greek school terminology in Bardaiṣan's description of the Gymnosophists of India, preserved in Porphyry's *De Abstinentia*. Felix Jacoby, ed., *Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* 3.C (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 645–7. See also H. J. W. Drijvers, "Solomon as Teacher: Early Syriac Didactic Poetry," in *Symposium Syriacum IV*, 123–34.

14. Aphrahat, *Demonstrationes*, ed. I Parisot, *Patrologia Syriaca* 1 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894), col. 269.

15. This is the NRSV. The Hebrew of the massoretic text may be more literally rendered as "Be for the people in front of God."

16. Weitzman, *Syriac Version of the Old Testament*, 208.

17. 1 Chr 8:40 (ibid. 241); 1 Chr 16:40; 1 Chr 29:14 (ibid. 115); MT translations are NRSV.

18. Weitzman, *Syriac Version of the Old Testament*, 214.

19. Ibid. 214.

20. Ibid. 214. See also 2 Chr 24:7; 30:3.

21. See ibid. 275 for a discussion of 2 Kgs 22:14, the parallel of 2 Chr 34:22. Here *mišneh* is translated *b-tenyānūtā*, "in repetition," i.e., "in study," an even closer rendering of *mišnah*.

22. 1 Kg 18.43; 19.3; 2 Kg 4.12, 25, 38; 5.20. The one inconsistency is at 8.4, where *'laymā* is used instead of *talmīdā*. For an example of the figure of Gehazi used as a model, see Philoxenus in *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 54, #5.

23. See *Cause* 362.4–12, where 2 Kg 6:1–3 is cited as evidence that a "school" was built in the wilderness.

24. See T. Koonammakkal, "Ephrem's Idea of Revelation as Divine Pedagogy," *The Harp* (Kottayam) 16 (2003): 355–64.

25. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 40–43.

26. Ibid. 41.

27. Ephrem, *Hymnen De paradiso und Contra Julianum*, ed. Edmund Beck, CSCO 174–75; (Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1957), V.2–3; trans. in Ephrem, *Hymns on Paradise*, trans. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 102–3. See also VI.1.

28. Ephrem, *Hymnen de fide*, ed. Edmund Beck, CSCO 154–55 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955), 71: 6–7, trans. in Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 61–62.

29. Ephrem, *Sermons on Faith*, 5.1–24.

30. Lucas Van Rompay, "*Mallpânâ dilan Suryâyâ*: Ephrem in the Works of Philoxenus of Mabbog: Respect and Distance," *Hugoye* 7,1 (2004); Sebastian Brock, "St. Ephrem in the Eyes of Later Syriac Liturgical Tradition," *Hugoye* 2,1 (1999).

31. Again, Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 41.

32. For a recent work on Ephrem on silence, see Paul S. Russell, "Ephraem the Syrian on the Utility of Language and the Place of Silence." We look forward to Russell's forthcoming translation of Ephrem's *Hymns on Faith*.

33. See, for example, Sebastian Brock, "Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Greek," *Journal of the Syriac Academy* 3 (1977): 406–22; repr. in Brock, *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*, and idem, "Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity."

34. The older of the two manuscripts of the *Ecclesiastical History* is dated to

462/3 (St. Petersburg Codex). The manuscript of Eusebius's *On the Theophania* dates to 411 (British Library Add. 12150). Neither of these are autographs.

35. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* = *Ecclesiastical History* (Syriac): ch. 17.6 = p. 87; ch.17.7 = p. 88; ch. 17.15= p. 89.

36. Johannes von Lycopolis, *Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen*, ed. Sven Dedering, Arbeten utgivna med understöd av Vilhelm Ekmans Universitetsfond 43 (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell; Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1936), 1.12–13; See Lavenant's comments at John of Apamea, *Dialogues et traités*, 24.

37. *Doctrine of Addai*, ed. and tr. G. Phillips (London: Trübner, 1876); repr. with new translation, G. Howard (Texts and Translations 16; Ann Arbor, Mich.: Scholars Press, 1981), trans. 47; Syriac 23. On this particular passage, see Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 150ff.

38. Philoxène de Mabboug, *Homélies*, ed. and trans, E. Lemoine, SC 44 (Paris: Cerf, 1956), 221. For the older English translation and the Syriac text, see E. A. Wallis Budge, ed. and trans., *The Discourses of Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabbôgh, A.D. 485–519*, 2 vols. (London: Asher, 1894).

39. Frothingham, *Stephen bar Sudaili*, 12.

40. Lit. "speedy, prompt, quick."

41. Jacob of Sarug, *Homélies contre Juifs*, 1.1–2.

42. Ibid. 7.393–34.

43. Scher published this as an appendix to the *Cause*, see 399–402. For "skilled scribe," see lines 9 and 10.

44. Personal correspondence.

45. *Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene*, 231–48.

46. British Library Add. 12150 of 411, British Library Add. 17182 of 474, Vat. Syr. 140 of 528, British Library Add. 14479 of 533/4, British Library Add. 17107 of 541, Vat. Syr. 12 of 548, British Library Add. 12166 of 553, and British Library Add. 17157 of 565.

47. E.g., British Library Add. 14571 of 518 (for plate and description, see Hatch, *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*, 61), Vat. Syr. 112 of 552 (ibid. 73), Vat. Syr. 104 of 564 (ibid. 78), British Library Add. 17152 of 593 (ibid. 86).

48. Jacob of Sarug, *Homélies contre Juifs*, 4.145–52. On this passage, see also Bettiolo, "Scuola ed Economia Divina nella Catechesi della Chiesa di Persia," 153–54.

49. See Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, 150–57.

50. Davies, *Scribes and Schools*; Gammie and Perdue, eds., *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. Comparative work should certainly be done with the Persian sources; from the same volume, cf. James R. Russell, "The Sage in Ancient Iranian Literature," 81–92, and idem, "Sages and Scribes at the Courts of Ancient Iran," 141–46.

51. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 19–20.

52. Brock has published a number of these texts. For a general introduction, see Sebastian Brock, "Syriac Dispute Poems: The Various Types," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues*, ed. G. J. Reinink and H. L. J. Vanstiphout, OLA 42 (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), 109–19, repr. in Brock, *From Ephrem to Romanos*; see also Sebastian Brock, "The Dispute Poem: from Sumer to Syriac," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 1 (2001): 1–10.

53. Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, 89–99; Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa*, 40–75.

54. Ibid., 62.

55. It is worth noting that all manuscripts of this text are East-Syrian; cf.

Sebastian Brock, "A Piece of Wisdom Literature," *JSS* 13 (1968): 217 n. 4, repr. in Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity.*

56. Samuel Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity: The Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography," in Hägg and Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity,* ed. Hägg and Rousseau, 113.

57. Philip Rousseau, "Antony as Teacher in the Greek *Life,*" in Hägg and Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity,* 89–109; idem, "The Identity of the Ascetic Master in the *Historia Religiosa* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus: A New *Paideia*?" *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998): 228–44. See also the *Life of Zacharias of Mytilene,* for example, as discussed in Linda Hall Jones, *Roman Berytus: Beirut in Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 161–65. Jones's comments on student identity and religion (e.g., pp. 196, 199–201) provide useful comparative material for the schools I am studying in this book.

58. Many of the texts can be found in Bedjan, ed., *Acta martyrum et sanctorum syriace,* vols. 2, 4. Very little has been done on this large corpus of texts. For a recent study that admirably demonstrates what can be done with this material, see Walker, *Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq.*

59. Fragments of this cycle are extant in Sogdian, demonstrating its broad dissemination.

60. There is a fuller summary and a translation of the Ānāhīd portions of the story (*Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd Cycle,* 565–71, 583–603) in Brock and Harvey, eds., *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient,* 66–67, 82–89.

61. *Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd Cycle,* 560.9–12.

62. This adds a nice derogatory touch; on this term and its history in anti-Zoroastrian polemic, see Jonas Greenfield, "רמין מנושא," in *Joshua Finkel Festschrift,* ed. Sidney B. Hoenig and Leon D. Stitskin (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1974), 63–69.

63. *Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd Cycle,* 561.1–7. The foster parents are probably the family of his nursemaid.

64. Ibid. 562.16.

65. Ibid. 563.17.

66. Ibid. 564.8–11.

67. Ibid., 564.13; I note this because of the interesting similarity to the *zugot* of Mishnah Avot. See also TMBG I:134.14 (Syriac), II:280 (English).

68. *Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd Cycle,* 564.19–20.

69. Ibid., 565.6–7.

70. Ibid., 565.10.

71. Ibid., 568.6–7.

72. Ibid., 570–71.

73. Ibid., 575.13–15.

74. Ibid., 575.19.

75. Ibid., 579.6.

76. Ibid., 580.1–3.

77. Ibid., 580.20–581.1.

78. Ibid., 582.19.

79. The translation of the text is taken up again at this point by Brock and Harvey, eds., *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient,* 86–99.

80. Ibid. 87–8; *Pethion-Ādurhormizd-Ānāhīd Cycle,* 585.17–586.11.

81. Pethion is referred to as a teacher again at ibid., 600.20 and 603.3.

82. Ibid., 604.11, 13–4 cf. ibid., 603.10.

83. Ibid., 610.4–7 cf ibid. 613.1; 614.2; 615.15.

84. Ibid., 629.1; 3–4; 630.15; a "tested teacher" 631.4 in the colophon.

85. Ibid., 629.7; 8; 5 (in a comparison to the "martyrs" Paul and Peter).
86. Ibid., 629.13; 20.
87. Ibid., 629.20; 630.13.
88. Ibid., 630.1.
89. Walker, *Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq,* 121–62.
90. See, e.g., the discussion in Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 1–14.
91. For information on John of Tella, see Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature,* 81–82; BGSL 180; McCullough, *Short History of Syriac Christianity,* 82–83; see also Andrew Palmer, "Saints' Lives with a Difference: Elijah on John of Tella (d. 538) and Joseph on Theodotos of Amida (d. 698)," in *Symposium Syriacum IV,* 203–16, for a comparison of the style between this text and another less sophisticated life.
92. On Mār Abā, see Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse,* 163–91; BGSL 119–20; and Peeters, "Observations sur la vie syriaque de Mar Aba."
93. BGSL 180: presumably Baumstark is deriving this from the reference to the misfortunes that befell the city of Callinicum when it was seized by the Persians, see *Life of John of Tella,* 38.14ff.
94. The Syriac here includes a usage of the particle *lam* to express irony.
95. *Life of John of Tella,* 39.22–40.4.
96. Ibid. 42.5–7.
97. Ibid. 42.15–17.
98. Again the particle, *lam.*
99. Ibid. 42.24–43.25.
100. Ibid. 45.1.
101. Ibid. 46.13.
102. Ibid. 46.15.
103. For a critical assessment of the *Life,* see Peeters, "Observations sur la vie syriaque de Mar Aba."
104. *Life of Abā,* 206.
105. Ibid. 210.5–6.
106. Ibid. 210.7.
107. Ibid. 211.16; see also the discussion of this passage in Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 22–23 and my own comments on it in Becker, "Bringing the Heavenly Academy down to Earth," 183, 190.
108. *Life of Abā,* 211.6–11.
109. Ibid. 211.17–212.5.
110. Ibid. 215.10.
111. Ibid. 216.14.
112. Ibid. 216.18–217.4. This seems to be the standard course of learning. For example, in the *Chronicle of Siirt,* in the later sixth century, Gregory, future metropolitan of Nisibis, goes to the School of Seleucia after learning the psalms and then later attends the School of Nisibis (*Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 507).
113. *Life of Abā,* 221.11
114. Peeters, "Observations sur la vie syriaque de Mar Aba," 122, notes the failure of the terms "scholar" or "student" to fairly represent the Syriac *eskōlāyā.*
115. I hesitate to make this suggestion, but it is possible that the repetition of the root *S-P-R* "to tonsure" (*Life of John of Tella,* 44.8; 45.3, 16; 46.10) is a play on words with the *sephrā* (pagan "literature"; homonymous root *S-P-R*), which John rejects. *S-P-R* can also be used for sharpening a pen reed.

116. For example, she is referred to as "worthy of blessings" (*Life of John of Tella*, 43.19–20). Note also the long convoluted sentence apologizing for his mother's behavior.

117. This contrast could be further developed as an essential difference between certain West-Syrian and East-Syrian authors. On secular learning later among the West Syrians, see Conrad, "Varietas Syriaca."

118. Christianity's flexible mapping onto an indigenous culture is a major theme in Frankfurter's impressive *Religion in Roman Egypt.*

119. *Synodicon Orientale*, 396–97 (*Das Buch der Synhados*, 204–6). See also Martin Tamcke, "Teachers and Pupils: The Lasting Importance of Canon 3 of the Synod of Seleucia-Ctesiphon of the Year 585–86," *The Harp* 10,3 (1997): 41–44, which includes application of this canon to the present.

*Chapter 2. The School of the Persians (Part 1)*

1. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, 161–62.

2. See introductory remarks in Vössing, *Schule und Bildung im Nordafrika der Römischen Kaiserzeit*, 7–45; on the purpose and function of education in the Roman Empire in general, see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 11–95, esp. 15–31.

3. For example, note the terms used for the School in Segal, *Edessa*, 150–51.

4. Note the title of Adrianus Van Selms's *Nisibis: The Oldest University* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1966) or Mar Abraham Mattam, "The School of Nisibis-Edessa: First Theological University in Christendom," *Christian Orient* 6 (1985): 30–39.

5. See, for example, Annewies van den Hoek, "The 'Catechetical' School of Early Christian Alexandria and Its Philonic Heritage," HTR 90, 1 (1997): 59–87; repr. in Ferguson, ed., *Forms of Devotion*, 19–47. Contemporary Coptic and Syriac Christians have latched onto Western scholarly reconstructions of these so-called schools for apologetic and nationalist purposes.

6. Drijvers, "The School of Edessa," 51–52.

7. For an early example, see the discussion in Hayes, *École d'Édesse.* On pages 144–45, Hayes argues that the "School of the Persians" was either next to or in the place of the older "School of Edessa." Also see Hermann Robert Nelz, *Die Theologischen Schulen der Morganländischen Kirchen* (Bonn: Rhenania, 1916), 57–76.

8. De Vries, "Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon," 607–8.

9. In general, see de Vries, "Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon," and Patrick T. R. Gray, *The Defense of Chalcedon in the East (451–553)* (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

10. The main resource for this development of a separate ecclesiastical hierarchy remains Ernest Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VIe siècle*, CSCO 127 (Louvain: Durbecq, 1951).

11. For example, see Pseudo-Zachariah, *Chronicle*, 26.

12. *Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, 46 (English). See the Introduction, "Mesopotamian Society in the Persian War of 502–6," xliv–li.

13. For a good example of many of the assumptions about the School that I am arguing against as well as what I deem a faulty methodology, see VHSN 7–32.

14. VHSN 12; Segal, *Edessa*, 93; Drijvers, "The Man of God of Edessa, Bishop Rabbula, and the Urban Poor," 242–43; Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, 69.

15. See note 6 in Chapter Seven.

16. Blum, *Rabbula von Edessa*, 165–74.

17. Jacob of Sarug, *Select Festal Homilies*, 3.

18. Segal, *Edessa*, 150.

19. This date is disputed in the secondary literature and will be addressed in the following chapter.

20. Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing," 3.

21. See note 14 above.

22. Biographical information from John of Ephesus's *Life of Simeon* in his *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 17: 137–58 (Chapter X); see BGSL 145–46.

23. See Arthur Jeffrey, "Three Documents on the History of Christianity in South Arabia," *Anglican Theological Review* 27 (1945): 195–205; Axel Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1924); Irfan Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran: New Documents*, Subsidia Hagiographica 49 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1971), esp. Syriac text in Section III and translation in Section IV (43–64). More recently, see Christian Robin, Joëlle Beaucamp, and Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, "La persécution des chrétiens et la chronologie himyarite," *Aram* 11/12 (1999/2000): 15–83.

24. For text and Latin translation, see BO I: 346–58; Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, 450–56 relies too heavily on the Latin.

25. Ibid., 450 says the date is imprecise; Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 9: "an early 6th-century letter"; no date given: Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature*, 81; BGSL 146.

26. Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 356.

27. Ibid., 358.

28. See the reference to him at ibid., 352–53.

29. Ibid., 346.

30. Ibid., 347.

31. Ibid., 347.

32. Ibid., 348.

33. The Acts of the Fifth Ecumenical Council of 553 make a similar accusation; see extracts from the Acts Session I (NPNF vol. XIV, 303).

34. Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 349.

35. Ibid., 350.

36. Van Esbroeck, "Who Is Mari, the Addressee of Ibas' Letter?" 129; see also idem, "Une lettre de Dorothée," and the less recent Adhemar D'Alès, "La lettre d'Ibas a Marès le Persan," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 22 (1932): 5–25.

37. Ibas is accused of having the books of Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia at *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449*, 26.15–16 (trans 27.21–22).

38. For example, Pseudo-Zachariah II.3 refers to Ibas's *Letter to Mari of Nisibis* reviling Cyril and thus seems to think Mari was from Nisibis (Pseudo-Zachariah, *Chronicle*, 23).

39. Robert Doran, "On Reclaiming Ibas." I thank Prof. Doran for sharing this manuscript with me.

40. On his identity and name, see Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 351 n. 1.

41. Ibid.; Assemani translates: "In illa autem Schola commorabantur, quum Persae ibidem literis vacarent: quos inter . . ."

42. ibid., 352.

43. ibid., 353.

44. Assemani misleadingly translates this: "Narses vero Leprosus Nisibi scholam instituit." Cf. Garsoïan, *L'Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, 454, which follows this.

45. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 608.9–11 and *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 114.

46. Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 353; Ma'nā was at the Council of 486 held

by the Catholicos Acacius (485–495/6), who is referred to by Simeon, if he is identical with "Acacius the Aramaian" (*Synodicon Orientale,* 283). Even the late *Cause* suggests Ma'nā left before the exodus of 489 (*Cause* 384.1–2); cf. VHSN 38, esp. n. 21.

47. E.g., a third date is added by Vööbus, who thinks that Narsai left in 471 but that the School was finally closed in 489 (VHSN 46). More on the date of closure is presented in the next chapter.

48. For a general introduction to some of this literature, see Witold Witakowski, "Syrian Monophysite Propaganda in the Fifth to Seventh Centuries," in *Aspects of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium. Colloquium of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul 31 May–5 June, 1992,* ed. L. Rydén and J. O. Rosenqvist, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul Transactions 4. (Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute, 1993), 57–66.

49. E. Schwartz, ed., "Codex Vaticanus gr. 1431, eine antichalkedonische Sammlung aus der Zeit Kaiser Zenos," *Abhandlungen der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,* Philosoph.-philol. und hist. Kl., Bd. 32, Abh. 6. (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1927): 13–62.

50. R. Y. Ebied and L. R. Wickham, "Timothy Aelurus: Against the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon," in Laga et al., eds., *After Chalcedon,* 115–66.

51. Lucas Van Rompay, "A Letter of the Jews to the Emperor Marcian Concerning the Council of Chalcedon," OLP 12 (1981): 215–24.

52. E. Goeller, "Eine jakobitische 'vita' des Nestorius," OC 1 (1901): 276–87.

53. Text in F. Nau, ed., John Rufus, *Plerophoriae,* PO 8.1 (1912); see also Lorenzo Perrone, "Dissenso dottrinale e propaganda visionaria. Le Pleroforie di Giovanni di Maiuma," *Augustinianum* 29 (1989): 451–95.

54. Paul Mouterde, "Le concile de Chalcédoine d'après les historiens monophysites de langue syriaque," in Grillmeier and Bacht, eds., *Konzil von Chaledon,* I: 581–602; on the numerous florilegia, see Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition,* 2.1.63–71.

55. In general, see Alain Le Boulluec, *La notion de l'hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe–IIIe siècle,* and Susanna Elm, "The Polemical Use of Genealogies: Jerome's Classification of Pelagius and Evagrius Ponticus," SP 33 (1997): 311–18.

56. André de Halleux, "Die Genealogie des Nestorianismus nach der frühmonophysitischen Theologie," OC 66 (1982): 1–14.

57. Idem, "La dixième lettre de Philoxène aux monastères du Beit Gaugal," 5–79, esp. 1–17 (pp. 28–40).

58. E.g., *yullphānā* used throughout; ibid. p. 32 section 7, *qabbel hwaw.*

59. Ibid. p. 37 section 13, *ʿeqqārā marrīrā*; p. 39 section 16, *pĕraw(hy).*

60. Mishnah *Avot* 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12; 2:8.

61. Jacob of Sarug, *Letters,* 58.21–59.8.

62. See note 21 in Chapter 6.

63. For example, "Mar Jacob mentions about his studies at Edessa in his letter XIV indicating that he was in the school of Edessa around the year 470 when the writings of Diodore were being translated into Syriac." T. Kollamparampil, in Jacob of Sarug, *Select Festal Homilies,* 2; or BGSL 148, Jacob "soll seine theologische Bildung an der Perserschule in Edessa erhalten."

64. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 121.

65. For biographical texts of Jacob of Sarug, see P. Krüger, "Die sogenannte Philoxenosvita und die Kurzvita des Jacob von Serugh," *Ostkirchliche Studien* (Würtzburg) 21 (1972): 39–45; idem, "Ein bislang unbekannter sermo über Leben und Werk des Jacob von Serugh," OC 56 (1972): 80–11; idem, "Ein zweiter anonyme memra über Jacob von Serugh," OC 56 (1972): 112–49.

66. *Chronicle of Edessa*, 8.18–9/8.11 (LXXIII).

67. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Chronicle* Part III, 1 (Syriac, Part III, p. 2).

68. For a full study of this text, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and* The Lives of the Eastern Saints (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

69. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 17:138–39.

70. Brooks suggests the same in a footnote on p. 139.

71. Pseudo-Dionysius, *Chronicle* Part III, xxix, 53–62 (Syriac, Part III, pp. 57–67).

72. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 10, see also 99ff; The document is in J. B. Chabot, ed. and trans., *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)* (1899; repr. Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation, 1963), vol. IV, pp. 423–27. The *Chronicle* extends to 1194/5.

73. Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, IV:424 (French translation p. 436).

74. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 99ff.

75. On Michael's use of sources, see J. J. Van Ginkel, "Making History: Michael the Syrian and His Sixth-Century Sources," in *Symposium Syriacum VII*, ed. R. Lavenant OCA 256 (Rome: Pontificial Institute, 1998), 351–58.

76. *Cause* 381.1.

77. *Cause* 383.2–3.

78. Theodore Anagnostes, *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. G. C. Hanson (Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 54. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1971), 122.

79. Ibid., 155.

80. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.10.1–4.

81. Paris ms. 1452, miniscule (on this manuscript, see *Life of Alexander the Sleepless*, 657).

82. Ibid. 654–55.

83. See discussion in Pierre-Louis Gatier, "Un moine sur la frontière, Alexandre l'Acémète en Syrie," in *Frontières terrestres, frontières célestes dans l'antiquité*, ed. Aline Rousselle (Paris: De Bocard, 1995), 435–57, esp. 435–41. Gatier questions the authenticity of the Rabbula section (456).

84. Blum, *Rabbula von Edessa*, 170–71 (in contrast, Blum questions the authenticity of the *Life*'s treatment of the conversion of Rabbula, 36–39); VHSN 9; see also Arthur Vööbus, "La Vie d'Alexandre en grec: un témoin d'une biographie inconnue de Rabbula écrite en syriaque," *Contributions of the Baltic University* 62 (1948): 1–16; T. Hermann, "Die Schule von Nisibis vom 5. bis 7. Jahrhundert," *Zeitscrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 25 (1926): 112–13.

85. This is an inaccuracy and may be a later gloss; see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 262 n. 78.

86. *Life of Alexander the Sleepless*, 673.13–674.13.

87. Gatier, "Un moine sur la frontière," 440.

88. For a treatment of the early portion of the *Life*, see Glen W. Bowersock, "The Syriac Life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism," in Hägg and Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 255–71. On p. 255 Bowersock notes that the *Life* differs from the material found in the *Life of Alexander the Sleepless*.

89. See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2.2.338–43.

90. Van Esbroeck, "Who Is Mari, the Addressee of Ibas' Letter?"; idem, "Une lettre de Dorothée"; see also Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2.2.416 n. 401.

91. Theodoret, *Letters*, 142 (CXLI) and 143 (CXLII) (PG 83); for Marcellus's condemnation of Eutyches, see Joannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum*

*nova et amplissima collectio* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1960–61), vol. 6, col. 753.

92. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2.2.13; see also 2.2.252 n. 104.

93. Ibid, 2.2.252–62, for the Sleepless monks and their fabricated correspondence with Peter the Fuller.

94. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 250.

95. Becker, *Sources for the History of the School at Nisibis*, Introduction.

96. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 495. For the prologue and the earlier portion of the text, see F. Nau, ed., *La première partie de l'histoire de Barhadbešabba 'Arbaya*, PO 23.2 (1932).

97. Ibid., Chapter XXXII, pp. 616–31; see translation in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*.

98. Ibid., Chapter XXXI, pp. 588–615; see translation in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*.

99. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue*, 85–86 (Chap. LXI).

100. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, II:106–7 (CLXI). This is the only East-Syrian reference to Ibas in Wright's catalogue; however, a majority of Wright's sources came from a Syrian Orthodox monastery. He appears in several West-Syrian manuscripts, most notably in quotations or references to the *Letter to Mari*.

101. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 596.6; 597.11: "School of Edessa"; 596.12: "Assembly."

102. See discussion in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School at Nisibis*, Introduction.

103. *Cause* 332.1–2.

104. Ibid. 381.8.

105. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 598.11 and *Cause* 382.4; the texts are here clearly related to one another.

106. It has been noted that the *Cause*'s brief description of Ephrem is in accord with the tradition found in, for example, the *mēmrā* (metrical homily) on Ephrem by Jacob of Sarug, which also focuses on his works within the community and the church. This is in contrast to the biographical tradition which makes Ephrem a reclusive ascetic holy man (Joseph P. Amar, "The Syriac 'Vita' Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian" 19–20). For Jacob's homily, see "A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Jacob of Sarug; Critical Edition of the Syriac Text, Translation and Introduction," ed. J. Amar, *PO* 47:1 (1995): 1–76.

107. For a discussion of the sources, see "Les sources de la Chronique de Séert," PdO 14 (1987): 155–66.

108. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 114.

109. Ibid. 7: 121.

110. Brock, "Syriac Historical Writings," 23–25; Samir Khalil Samir, *Alphonse Mingana, 1878–1937, and His Contribution to Early Christian-Muslim Studies* (Birmingham: Selly Oak Collges, 1990), 12–14, for a full treatment of the controversy. For the main critique of the work's authenticity, see J.-M. Fiey, "Auteur et date de la chronique d'Arbèles," OS 12 (1967): 265–302. Julius Assfalg, "Zur Textüberlieferung der Chronik von Arbela," OC 50 (1966): 19–36. See now Walker, *Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, 287–90, as well as the useful summary of the debate in Edward G. Mathews, Jr.'s review of Ilaria Ramelli, *Il Chronicon di Arbela: Presentazione, traduzione e note essenziali* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense Madrid, 2002) at http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2003/2003-11-01.html.

111. *Chronicle of Arbela*, 69–70 (in German 95–96).

*Chapter 3. The School of the Persians (Part 2)*

1. The Acts, originally written in Greek, are extant only in the one Syriac version from 535, preserved by the West Syrians. For text and translation, see *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449.* For a full description of the following events, see William H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1–49, esp. pp. 35–43. Aside from Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum,* II:1026–30, a description of this manuscript (British Library, Add. 14530) as well as a sample page can be found in Hatch, *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts,* 68.

2. *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449,* 12:10–11.

3. Ibid. 12:4–5.

4. Ibid. 12:32–14:4.

5. See the list in ibid. 59.

6. See Drijvers, "The Man of God of Edessa, Bishop Rabbula, and the Urban Poor," especially p. 247 for Drijvers's characterization of the two. See also idem, "Rabbula, Bishop of Edessa: Spiritual Authority and Secular Power," in Drijvers and Watt, eds., *Portraits of Spiritual Authority,* 139–54.

7. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue,* Chap. LXI (85). We may associate Rabbula with the translations of Cyril of Alexandria's works, but there is little "hard evidence" (see BGSL 71–72).

8. *Life of Rabbula* 160.25–26 (other edition: 5: 397 lines 19–20). Cf. Glen W. Bowersock, "The Syriac Life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism," in Hägg and Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity,* 262.

9. Drijvers, "The Man of God of Edessa," 245.

10. *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449,* 24:22–24. The word rendered "citizens" (Gr. *politeuómenoi*) may also be understood to refer to the curial class or perhaps government administrators.

11. On these events, see VHSN 28–30.

12. Frend's presentation of the material takes the Acts at face value at this point. Chaireas, the Comes, who came to Edessa in 449 and whose report to the council told of the chaos and popular protests on his arrival, may have been willingly duped by organized protests into thinking the city was on the verge of anarchy. We must remember that he was Theodosius's man in the region, sent there for a particular purpose, and that Theodosius had already decided in whose favor the council would judge.

13. For more on the *Life of Rabbula,* see Paul Peeters, "La vie de Rabboula, évêque d'Édesse," *Recherches de science religieuse* 18 (1928): 170–204; idem, repr. in *Recherches d'histoire et de philologie orientales,* Subsidia Hagiographica 27 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1951), I: 139–70. On the miracles performed at his grave, see *Life of Rabbula* 208.11–19.

14. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae,* ed. and trans. J. C. Rolfe, I-III (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press; London, Heinemann, 1935–40), 25.7.9–11.

15. For details, see Greatrex and Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars,* 1–13.

16. It is worth noting that Walter Bauer devoted a whole chapter to Edessene material in his groundbreaking *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum.* Walter Bauer with George Strecker, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity,* trans. and ed. from the 2nd German edition, 1964, by Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 1–43.

17. See, e.g., the discussion on the different early Christian communities in the Sasanian realm in Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire."

18. Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europas: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden: Peeters, 1999).

19. See Ross, *Roman Edessa,* 85–100. For further discussion of religious practice in non-Christian Edessa and its environs, see also Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa.* For a recent work on the earlier politicl history of the region, see Tommaso Gnoli, *Roma, Edessa e Palmira nel III sec.* (Pisa/Rome: Instituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2000).

20. See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 5.24 for evidence of an agreement to disagree.

21. See Greatrex and Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars,* 31–52 ("The Mesopotamian Frontier in the Fifth Century"). For the earlier period, see the volume which preceded this one: Dodgeon and Lieu, eds., *The Eastern Roman Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 226–363.*

22. *Itinerarium Egeriae,* 19.2–4, which is followed by Egeria's early version of the Abgar story. See Egeria, *Journal de Voyage: Itinéraire,* ed. Pierre Maraval, SC 296 (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 202–4. On the "image of Edessa" tradition, see Drijvers, "The Image of Edessa in the Syriac Tradition," and Averil Cameron, "The Mandylion and Byzantine Iconoclasm," both in *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation,* ed. Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (Bologna: Nuova Alfa 1998), 13–31, 33–54.

23. Gregory of Tours, *Libri Miraculorum, Liber Primus De Gloria Beatorum Martyrum,* ch. 32 (PL vol. 71, coll. 733–34); cf. Segal, *Edessa,* 176.

24. See comments in Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (English), 104, n. 486.

25. Albert Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques dans la Turquie orientale,* 2 vols. (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1940), 1:134f.

26. John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints,* 17: 221; for the School of the Urtāyē, see 19: 219; Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* Part III, 5 and n. 38; Syriac, Part III, 5.

27. See also the monastery at Constantina "called of Bēt ʿArbāyē," thus suggesting that its members came from across the border in Persia. Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, *Chronicle* Part III, 27, 29; Syriac, Part III, 27, 29. For the expulsion of the monks from the Monastery of the Orientals, see *Chronicle of Edessa,* 8.23–27; see also Pseudo-Dionysius, *Chronicle* Part III, 27, 33, 37; Syriac, Part III, 27, 34, 39; cf. Segal, *Edessa,* 62–76. There is also a "Monastery of the Persians" outside Nisibis, see Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History,* 605.6–7, *Cause* 384.5.

28. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 105. However, no Persians are named, and just prior to this the text states that earlier the East was wholly orthodox (i.e., "Nestorian"). This passage may be merely an explanation for the rise of "heresy" in the East, a mirror image of the statements of Simeon of Bēt Aršam.

29. Théodoret de Cyr, *Histoire des moines de Syrie,* ed. and trans. Pierre Canivet and Alice Leroy-Molinghen, SC 234, 257; Paris: Cerf, 1977–79), Life VIII. Also in Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria,* trans. R. M. Price, Cistercian Studies 88 (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1985), 72–80.

30. On this culture of wandering, see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks.* On the Messalians, see ibid. 83–125 and Stewart, *"Working the Earth of the Heart."*

31. Arthur Amiaud, ed., *La légende syriaque de saint Alexis, l'homme de Dieu,* Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes 79 (Paris: É. Bouillon, 1889). See also Harvey, "The Holy and the Poor: Models from Early Syriac Christianity," and Drijvers, "The Man of God of Edessa."

32. The late *Acts of Mār Mārī* even describe the apostle founding schools (*Acts of Mār Mārī,* 22.6–10). However, we should be careful in speculating about the real

practice of wandering from texts that seem to advocate this kind of life. See, for example, the recent critiques of supposed wanderers in the early Jesus movement in William Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 13–95, and J. A. Draper, "Weber, Theissen, and 'Wandering Charismatics' in the *Didache*," JECS 6 (1998): 541–76.

33. On Maʿnā and his arrival and departure from Edessa, see *Cause* 381.11–382.2; 384.1–2; note the connection the text makes between him and Narsai and Barṣaumā. He also appears in Simeon of Bēt Aršam's list of heretics to leave Edessa (Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 352, 353). See also *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116–17. In general, see BGSL 105–6; BO III.1.376–78.

34. Alphonse Mingana, "New Documents on Philoxenus of Hierapolis, and on the Philoxenian Version of the Bible," *The Expositor* IX.19 (1920): 151; see also André de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog: Sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie* (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1963), 12–17. On his knowledge of Theodore, see J. W. Watt, "Philoxenus and the Old Syriac Version of Evagrius' Centuries," OC 64 (1980): 65–81.

35. See the discussions of this material in Robert W. Thomson, "The Formation of the Armenian Literary Tradition," in *East of Byzantium*, 135–50, repr. in Thomson, *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994); idem, "The Fathers in Early Armenian Literature," *Studia Patristica* 12 (Berlin, 1975), 457–70, (repr. in *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity*; Garsoïan, *Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, 45–134, esp. 68–69.

36. James Russell, "On the Origins and Invention of the Armenian Script," *Le Muséon* 107 (1994): 317–33. The Greco-Aramaic origins of the script demonstrate the bilingual context of contemporary Edessa.

37. Moses Khorenatsʿi, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 3.62. Also see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.13, the source for which Eusebius states comes from the archives of Edessa. These archives may have served as a source for the *Chronicle of Edessa* and Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite cf. *Chronicle* (English), xxxii–xxxiii for speculation on this.

38. Moses Khorenatsʿi, *History of the Armenians*, 7–8.

39. *Life of Mashtots* 29.133–35, in Gabriele Winkler, ed., *Koriwns Biographie des Mesrop Maštoc': Übersetzung und Kommentar*, OCA 245 (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1994), 111. Cf. Eznik of Kolb, *On God*, 11–16.

40. Garsoïan, *Église Arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, 69.

41. BM Add 17102; dated to the year 910 of the Greeks; Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, I.11–2 (XVII). See also Garsoïan, *Église arménienne et le grand schisme d'Orient*, 69 n. 97. Like Garsoïan, I too thank Ed Mathews for pointing this out to me.

42. Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle*, 34; *Chronicle* (English), 33. In his commentary on this text Luther expresses surprise that the School of the Persians is not mentioned, Martin Luther, *Die syrische Chronik des Joshua Stylites* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 170. For orthographic reasons "schools" may in fact be "school" here. The Syriac *syame*, which usually marks the plural, is used in singulars for Greek loan words ending in *eta*. See comments in Pseudo-Joshua, *Chronicle* (English), xxvi. As they note, the Chronicler regularly uses "our," thus lessening the potential significance of this usage here.

43. Moshe Weinfeld, *The Organizational Pattern and the Penal Code of the Qumran Sect: A Comparison with Guilds and Religious Associations of the Hellenistic-Roman Period*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus 2; (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1986).

44. Stephen G. Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," in Kloppenberg and Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 4; see also John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*," ibid., 18, 22. For a history of the scholarship on voluntary associations and the study of Christianity, including bibliography, see Richard S. Ascough, "Translocal Relationships Among Voluntary Associations and Early Christianity" *JECS* 5, 2 (1997): 223–41.

45. Jonas Greenfield, "The Marzeah as a Social Institution," *Acta Antiqua* 22 (1974): 451–55; Philip J. King, "The *Marzēaḥ*: Textual and Archaeological Evidence," *Eretz-Israel* 20 (1987): 98–106. See now evidence in John L. McLaughlin, *The Marzeah in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 2001). For a discussion of evidence from Palmyra, see Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, 229–34.

46. Albert Baumgarten, "Graeco-Roman Voluntary Associations and Ancient Jewish Sects," in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 107–8; Glen W. Bowersock, "Les Euemeroi et les Confréries Joyeuses," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (November–December 1999): 1241–56.

47. Fragment 62a from Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 210e–f, Ludwig Edestein and I. G. Kidd, eds., *Posidonius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–99), *II, The Commentary: (i) Testimonia and Fragments 1–149*, 301 (trans. Baumgarten, "Graeco-Roman Voluntary Associations and Ancient Jewish Sects," 97).

48. See, e.g., the discussion in Torrey Seland, "Philo and the Clubs and Associations of Alexandria," in Kloppenberg and Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World*, 110–27.

49. See, e.g., Angelos Chaniotis, "The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and Old Problems," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 21 (2002): 209–42.

50. *Chronicle of Edessa*, 6.21–25. Guidi notes that Hall suggested that "Jews" here should be emended to "Audians."

51. Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 353.

52. "Once established, voluntary associations seem invariably to have developed an organizational hierarchy. At an early stage, as in the Pauline churches and some of the mystery cults, the organization may have been informal and ad hoc, but eventually some kind of formal structure was assumed." Wilson, "Voluntary Associations: An Overview," 10.

53. Compare Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 598.10–14 and *Cause* 382.3–7.

54. See the discussion of the relationship between these two texts in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*, Introduction.

55. Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4:15; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 17: 89–90 offers a fascinating story of recluse monks training local youths to read scripture; cf. Segal, *Edessa*, 149.

56. See introductory comments in Vössing, *Schule und Bildung im Nordafrika der Römischen Kaiserzeit*, 7–45; also see Kaster, "Notes on 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Schools in Late Antiquity."

57. Narsai, *Metrical Homilies on Festivals*, II. Epiphany 519–22 (pp. 102–3).

58. Ibid. V. Ascension 164–70 (pp. 172–73); "Rank of the office of 'rabban'" in Syriac is *dargā d-rabbanūtā*.

59. E.g., Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 603.12; however, envy as a cause of persecution is such a trope that it throws this account into doubt.

60. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 596.2–597.11.

61. For a brief discussion of this material, see Van Rompay, "Quelques remarques sur la tradition syriaque."

62. *Cause* 382.12–69.1.

63. Ibid. 382.10–11.

64. Ibid. 378.14–379.13.

65. On the translations of Theodore of Mopsuestia: *Cause* 383.3–4; on Ephrem: *Cause* 382.7–11.

66. See note 33 above.

67. Ibas as translator: ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 85 (Chap. LXI); however, it is unclear what we can take from this passage. See also Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, II: 107, BM Add. 12138 (CLXI); the brief "Traditions of the Masters of the Schools" on the last page (312a) includes a note on Joseph Hūzāyā's invention of the pointing system and mentions that Ibas "along with other men learned in the divine scriptures" translated the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia. For translations associated with the circle of Rabbula, see BGSL 71–72.

68. Daphna Ephrat and Yaakov Elman, "Orality and the Institutionalization of Tradition: The Growth of the Geonic Yeshiva and the Islamic Madrasa," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000), 109–10.

69. The Church of the East itself was not so much "nestorianized" as it held fast to Antiochene theology and exegesis. See, e.g., Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 130.

70. VHSN 33–34. The former include Duval, Wright, Chabot, Nöldeke, Sachau, Labourt, and Brockelmann; the latter Duval again, Mingana, Scher, Baumstark, Hayes, and Chabot again.

71. VHSN 34–47.

72. VHSN 41–43. He refers on p. 43 n. 9 to a document he refers to as the "Letter of Narsai," a text published the year before. Arthur Vööbus, "Les vestiges d'une lettre de Narsai et son importance historique," OS 9 (1964), 512–23. But nowhere does he state the most important fact: the supposed "Letter of Narsai" has been taken from the "Life of Narsai" in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Barḥadbĕšabbā (604.9–605.3). Vööbus's use of evidence here is circular and relies on a source of questionable value.

73. VHSN 46.

74. Recall the title this document bears in manuscript form: "The history of the Holy Fathers who were Persecuted because of the Truth." Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 495.

75. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 61, supports Vööbus's position with regard to two exoduses. Fiey, *Nisibe*, 41 mentions the problem and Vööbus's resolution of it.

76. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, Chap. XXXI, pp. 588–615.

77. On this event, see Alan Cameron, "The End of the Ancient Universities," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 10 (1966–67): 653–73; idem, "The Last Days of the Academy at Athens," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 195 (1969): 7–29.

78. *Chronicle of Edessa*, 8.18–19 (LXXIII); Jacob of Sarug, *Letters*, 59.3; Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 353; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 17: 139.9; *Cause* 332.2.

79. E.g., de Halleux, "La dixième lettre de Philoxène aux monastères du Beit Gaugal," 37 (11, 13).

80. *Cause* 332.2; Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 606.9; *Memra on the Holy Fathers*, line 6 (*Cause* 400); John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 17: 139.5

81. For example, see Christine Shepardson, "In the Service of Orthodoxy: Anti-Jewish Language and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 2003), or the forthcoming collection

of sources for the bishop Rabbula by Cornelia Horn and Robert R. Phenix, Jr., as well as Robert's Doran's forthcoming collection of translations.

*Chapter 4. The School of Nisibis*

1. The manuscript is corrupt here.
2. Īšōʿyahb III, *Letters* I:7, 9 (Syriac), 12 (Latin).
3. Part I, *Letters* 35 and 52, Part II, *Letters* 16, 19, 28, and 29. There are no letters from Part III, suggesting that perhaps Hormizd was dead. This also means that the proportion of letters to Hormizd is even higher.
4. *Cause* 386.9; cf. the title of Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth'," 77. Fiey also quotes this striking line (Fiey, *Nisibe*, 41).
5. VHSN 33–56 and passim; Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 60–67; furthermore, the foundation is treated at least briefly in most discussions of the School.
6. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 60–67, esp. 65.
7. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 608.9–11. Also note that Simeon of Bēt Aršam does not mention the founding of the School (Simeon of Bēt Aršam, *Epistola*, 354).
8. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 608.11–13: "but the prior schoolmen (*eskōlāyē*) busied themselves with learning. In a short time brothers began to gather from all regions because of this holy man." This depends on whether "eskōlāyē qadmāyē" refers to Simeon's or Narsai's students.
9. Trans. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 64 (*Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 114).
10. *Acts of Mār Mārī*, 22.6–10. See the recent work on this text by Christelle and Florence Jullien, including their new text and translation, *Les Actes de Mar Mari* (CSCO 602–3; Louvain: Peeters, 2003).
11. Fiey, *Nisibe*, 41 perhaps expands on the evidence too much.
12. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 67. Gero rejects the possibility that Barṣaumā's aid in the founding of the School reflects his dispute with the Catholicos concerning priestly celibacy. However, the possibility of this deserves further consideration.
13. Villagomez, "The Fields, Flocks, and Finances of Monks," 34.
14. Ibid., 4.
15. VHSN 210.
16. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 622.11–623.1.
17. On the *xenodocheîon* in general, see Olivia Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade, and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 35–38, as well as Andrew T. Crislip, "Monastic Health Care System and the Development of the Hospital in Late Antiquity" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2002); for Syriac material, see relevant discussion in Harvey, "The Holy and the Poor: Models from Early Syriac Christianity," and Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's* Life *and the Late Antique City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 57–71.
18. Canons of Ḥĕnānā 19 and 20 (*Statutes*, 100–101).
19. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 623.1–623.9. This is a bizarre passage. We are told that the brothers when sick were not able to work and that they were then in turn stripped of their clothes. This resulted in their being unable to travel to either the School or the church.
20. Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 623.10–624.4.
21. I see no reason to agree with Vööbus, who suggests that "village" here is being used loosely and should be rendered "farm" (VHSN 146).

22. This is in contrast to, for example, Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 623.8, which suggests that some of the brothers rented rooms in town.

23. See, for example, Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 349–51; Vivian Nutton, *Ancient Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 301; and idem, "From Galen to Alexander," 12–13. For more on Qaśwī, see VHSN 152, 172.

24. This is treated, perhaps a bit anachronistically, in N. V. Pigulevskaja, *Les villes de l'état iranien aux époques Parthe et Sassanide: Contribution à l'histoire sociale de la Basse Antiquité*, École Pratiques des Hautes Études, VIe section, Documents et Recherches 6 (Paris: Mouton, 1963).

25. Villagomez, "The Fields, Flocks, and Finanaces of Monks," 112–13.

26. TMBG I:46.18–19 (Syriac), II:79–80 (English).

27. Barhebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* II, ed. J. B. Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy (Louvain-Paris, 1874), col. 127; see also text in ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 113–44 (Chap. LXXIV).

28. TMBG I:81.7–10 (Syriac), II:180 (English).

29. Ibid. I:136.10–137.5 (Syriac), II:282–3 (English).

30. I. Guidi, "Gli statuti della scuola di Nisibi," *Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana* (Rome) 4 (1890): 169–95; J.-B. Chabot, "L'École de Nisibe, son histoire, ses statuts"; E. Nestle, "Die Statuten der Schule von Nisibis aus den Jahren 496–590," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 18 (1898): 221–29; Pigulevskaja, *Villes de l'état iranien*, 244–51 (see note 24 above); VHSN 90–99, 147–48, and 269–75; and of course Vööbus's 1961 edition, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis*.

31. I do not include here the Arabic versions or the compendium of ʿAbdīšōʿ. Unless otherwise stated, translations are from Vööbus's edition (*Statutes*).

32. *Statutes*, 52 (translation in this line mine).

33. Ibid., 53.

34. Ibid., 53; "insolent ones" also on 66.

35. Ibid., 54.

36. Ibid., 70.

37. Ibid., 56; see VHSN 90–96.

38. *Statutes*, 75–76.

39. August to October.

40. Ibid., 77–78.

41. Ibid., 79.

42. Ibid., 83–84.

43. Ibid., 88: "under the supreme and skilful teaching of our fathers and the *rabbānē*, God-loving Mār Abraham, presbyter and *mphašqānā* of the divine books, and Mār Narsai, deacon and *maqryānā*."

44. Ibid., 92: "during the teaching of Ḥenānā, presbyter, skilful in his knowledge and glorious in his humility, and Mār Qaššā, *maqryānā* and *bādōqā*, and Mār Ḥenanīšōʿ, presbyter and *mhagyānā* together with Ḥūḥ the *rabbaytā* of the school and all the outstanding and *bādōqā* brothers that are in the community this time."

45. Ibid., 94.

46. Ibid., 95–96.

47. Ibid., 96.

48. Ibid., 97.

49. Ibid., 98.

50. Ibid., 98–99.

51. Ibid., 99.

52. Syriac "*knīkā*"; the *eskōlāyā* who converts Mār Abā is "a man poor and ascetic, gentle and humble, whose attire (*eskēmaw*[*hy*]) was modest and chaste (*knīkā*)" (*Life of Abā*, 211.9–11). See the discussion of this text in Chapter One.

53. Ibid., 99–100.

54. Ibid., 101.

55. Ibid., 104.

56. See, e.g., James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdsmans, 1994), 111.

57. E.g., Canon of Narsai 9; Canon of Ḥĕnānā 8 (*Statutes*, 79, 96).

58. See Scher's comments (*Cause* 398–99). Vööbus addresses the offices, *Nisibis*, 100–108 and passim.

59. E.g., Jacques Jarry, "Inscriptions syriaques et arabes du Tur Abdin," *Annales Islamologiques* 10 (1972): 242–43. There are also some recently discovered inscriptions which remain unpublished.

60. The root b-d-q can mean "to search out, spy out, or explore" in the peal and "to search out, examine" in pael form. J. Payne Smith, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary, Founded upon the Thesaurus Syriacus by R. Payne Smith*; (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 35–36.

61. Numerous gravestones from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Kyrgyzstan bear the title *eskōlāyā*. Wassilios Klein, *Das nestorianische Christentum an den Handelswegen durch Kyrgyzstan bis zum 14. Jh.* Silk Road Studies III (Turnhout: Brepols: 2000), 260–61.

62. For the best summary of the classical system, see Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity*, 150–57. Cf. Īšō'yahb III, *Life of Īšō'sabran*, 525.

63. Thomas of Edessa, *On the Birth of Christ*, 27.15–28.5; On this passage, see Bettiolo, "Scuola ed Economia Divina nella Catechesi della Chiesa di Persia," 152–53, see 154 for a discussion of similar passages in Thomas's text. Cf. *Cause* 348.4–349.13 and Jacob of Sarug, *Homélies contre Juifs*, 4:145–52.

64. Cf. VHSN 102–3.

65. Similarly, there was an overlap between the work of the teacher of letters and the grammarian; see Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 45–47.

66. E.g, Canon of Narsai 8, Canon of Ḥĕnānā 5 (*Statutes*, 79, 94–95); see also VHSN 103, 283.

67. *Cause* 383.7–14; Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 598.10–599.9; though these two texts seem to be related to one another. See also the relevant discussion in Chapters Three and Five.

68. *Cause* 383.11–14.

69. See VHSN 220, for using this to date his death.

70. *Cause* 389.1–5.

71. The literary production of each head of the School and those associated with them has been conveniently gathered by VHSN, passim.

72. For the large number of exegetical works attributed to the head interpreters and other members of the School's hierarchy, see also BGSL 113–30, passim.

73. See also Lucas Van Rompay, ed. and trans., *Le Commentaire sur Genèse-Exode 9,32 du manuscript (olim) Diyarbakir 22*, CSCO 483–84 (Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 2: XXXII–XXXV.

74. See Molenberg, "The Silence of the Sources," for a good treatment of many of the issues pertaining to the history of East-Syrian exegesis at this time.

75. John of Bēt Rabban: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue*, 77 (Chap. LVI); Michael the Interpreter: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue*, 147 (Chap. LXXVI). This genre would continue, as is attested by the work of the late-seventh, early-eighth-century Īšō' bar Nūn, who went through the East-Syrian schools; see, e.g., Ernest G. Clarke, ed., *The Selected Questions of Isho bar Nun on the Pentateuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1962). For a full discussion of this genre in Syriac, see Bas Ter Haar Romeny, "Question-and-Answer

Collections in Syriac Literature," in *Erotapokriseis: Early Christian Question-and-Answer Literature in Context, Proceedings of the Utrecht Colloquium, 13–14 October 2003,* ed. Annelie Volgers and Claudio Zamagni (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), 145–63.

76. Molenberg, "The Silence of the Sources," 151–55, see 155 for a schematization of changes in exegesis.

77. Lucas Van Rompay, "Development of Biblical Interpretation in the Syrian Churches of the Middle Ages," in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation,* 1/2, ed. Magne Saebo et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2000), 564–65.

78. The two main studies and editions are Kihn, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten,* and Maas, *Exegesis and Empire.* See also idem, "Junillus Africanus' *Instituta Regularia Divinae Legis* in its Justinianic Context," in Allen and Jeffreys, eds., *The Sixth Century: End or Beginning?,* 131–44; VHSN 179–85; Wolfgang A. Bienert, "Die 'Instituta Regularia' des Junilius (Junillus) Africanus: Ein nestorianisches Kompendium der Biblewissenschaft im Abendland," in *Syrisches Christentum weltweit: Studium zur Syrischen Kirschengeschichte. Festschrift für Prof. W. Hage,* ed. Martin Tamcke, Wolfgang Schwaigert, and Egbert Schlarb, Studien zur orientalischen Kirchengeschichte (Münster: LIT, 1995), I: 307–24; Peter Bruns, "Bemerkungen zur biblischen Isagogik des Junilius Africanus," *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 68 (2000): 391–408; Becker, "The Dynamic Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Sixth Century."

79. Translation from Maas, *Exegesis and Empire,* 119–21.

80. Kihn, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten,* 337–43; VHSN 182–3; Bruns, "Bemerkungen zur biblischen Isagogik des Junilius Africanus," 402–3. See also Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface,* 39–72. For general bibliography, see texts referred to by Maas, *Exegesis and Empire;* earlier bibliography can be found in Kihn, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten.*

81. *History of Mārūtā,* 65.10–66.2. This passage is referred to at Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse,* 289.

82. See also, for example, the description of school activities presented by the monks of Bēt 'Ābē in the beginning of Chapter Nine.

83. Elisha bar Quzbāyē: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 167 (Chap. XC).

84. Thomas of Edessa: manuscript cited at VHSN 174; an extant piece by John of Bēt Rabban, referred to at VHSN 216.

85. John of Bēt Rabban: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 73 (Chap. LVI); Īšō'yahb of Adiabene: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 140 (Chap. LXXIV).

86. Īšō'yahb of Adiabene: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 140 (Chap.LXXIV) (see also VHSN 298 for his liturgical works).

87. John of Bēt Rabban: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 72 (Chap. LVI); *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116; Thomas of Edessa: 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 87 (Chap. LXIII).

88. 'Abdīšō', *Catalog,* 87 (Chap. LXIII).

89. See Furlani's edition, Īšō'yahb I, *On the Trisagion.* In general, see VHSN 224–27.

90. For Syriac grammatical and diacritical traditions in general, see Adalbert Merx, *Historia artis grammatica apud Syros* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1889); J. B. Segal, *The Diacritical Point and the Accents in Syriac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953; repr. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press 2003). See VHSN 160–61 and 198–99 on the work of Joseph Hūzāyā and 200–201 on Rāmīšō'. Further work needs to be done on the sources, but see the two studies based on British Library

Add. 12138, Gustav Diettrich, *Die Massorah der östlichen und westlichen Syrer* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1899) and Theodor Weiss, *Zur ostsyrischen Laut- und Akzentlehre* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933).

91. Balzaretti, "Ancient Treatises on Syriac Homonyms," 83.

92. This may explain the use of the correct reading of the unlearned as a miraculous act, e.g., Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 596.11. With regard to the defective writing system, in the early eleventh century Elias bar Shīnāyā states: "On account of this (i.e., that there are no vowels) they are not able to read correctly except, as if with divination, or from tradition, or from much work," Elias bar Shīnāyā, *A Treatise on Syriac Grammar*, ed. Richard J. H. Gottheil (Berlin: Wolf Peiser, 1887), 6.

93. *History of Mārūtā*, 66.2–9.

94. Elisha bar Quzbāyē: Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 620.5 *Cause* 387.6; John of Bēt Rabban: *Cause* 388.9; ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue* 72 (Chap. LVI) *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116.

95. See the preceding note.

96. Thomas of Edessa, ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 87 (Chap. LXIII).

97. John of Bēt Rabban: *Cause* 388.9; ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 72 (Chap. LVI); *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116.

98. Michael the Interpreter: see note 131 below.

99. John of Bēt Rabban: *Cause* 388.9. This may be the same as his treatise against heretics.

100. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 169 (Chap. XCIII).

101. Paul of Nisibis: ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 87 (Chap. LXV); Elisha bar Quzbāyē: *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 126; VHSN 126–27.

102. Abraham of Bēt Rabban: *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116; Paul of Nisibis: ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 87 (Chap. LXV); Īšōʿyahb I: ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 111 (Chap. LXXII).

103. *Statutes*, 107–9. Spelling has been adjusted to fit the usage in this book.

104. This is an incipit.

105. Vööbus (*Statutes*, 108 n. 6) takes this as "a liturgical term and means a part of a service sung sitting or a division of the Psalms, or prayers repeated between the Psalms."

106. An alteration of this translation would be: "The one who teaches the chanting (*sīʿātā*) with the lection shall teach the table of the funeral hymns."

107. *Pace* Vööbus, I take the *bēt mawtbē* to refer to the books of the Peshitta Old Testament that belong neither to the Torah nor to the Prophets.

108. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 185. See Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* II.639–59 for a detailed history.

109. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 186.

110. Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature*, 231–32; VHSN 319.

111. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 187–88. Spelling has been adjusted to fit the usage in this book. See also Ibn aṭ-Ṭaiyib, *Fiqh an-naṣrānīya*, "Das Recht der Christenheit," trans. W. Hoenerbach and O. Spies, CSCO 167–68 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1957), II:168.12–169.4.

112. Again, this is, roughly speaking, the Peshitta equivalent of the Writings of the Hebrew Bible.

113. See, for example, H. Gregory Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, 2000).

114. *Cause* 348.4–349.13.

115. Again, see *Cause* 389.1–5.

116. E.g., Nutton, "From Galen to Alexander," 12–13, and Michael W. Dols,

"The Origins of the Islamic Hospital: Myth and Reality," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 61 (1987): 367–69.

117. A. A. Siassi, "L'Université de Gond-i Shâpûr et l'étendue de son rayonnement," in *Mélanges d'Orientalisme offerts a Henri Massé* (Tehran: Imprimerie de l'Université, 1963), 367. Siassi even compares Jundashapur to Oxford, Cambridge, Princeton, and Göttingen.

118. Reinink, "Theology and Medicine in Jundishapur," 165–67. See p. 163 n. 3 for more critics of the Jundishapur tradition.

119. On this school, see W. Schweigert, "Die Theologenschule von Bēt Lāpāt —Gundaisabūr: Ein Beitrag zur nestorianischen Schulgeschichte," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Suppl. 4: XX. Deutscher Orientalistentag 1977 in Erlangen* (Wiesbaden, 1980): 185–87.

120. On this topic, see, for example, Rainer Degen, "Ein Corpus Medicorum Syriacorum," *Medizin historisches Journal* (Hildesheim) 7 (1972): 114–22; idem, "Galen im Syrischen: Eine Übersicht über die syrische Überlieferung der Werke Galens," in *Galen: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Vivian Nutton (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1981), 131–66; Michael W. Dols, "Syriac into Arabic: The Transmission of Greek Medicine," *Aram* 1, 1 (1989): 45–52.

121. BGSL 209–10. See "*A Medico-Mystical Work by Simon of Taibutheh* (Syriac text with introduction and translation)," in *Early Christian Mystics*, 1–69 and 281–320.

122. *Statutes*, 100–101.

123. Reinink, "Theology and Medicine in Jundishapur," 166–67.

124. *Statutes*, 100.

125. In general, see BGSL 129 and VHSN 278–79.

126. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 512.

127. This is published by Scher with the *Cause*. See *Cause* 400.8–9.

128. See Abramowski, "Zu den Schriften des Michael Malpana/Badoqa," in Reinink and Klugkist, eds., *After Bardaisan*, 1–10. Abramowski confirms that the "Book of Definitions" attributed to him is not his and "On Dreams," referred to by Vööbus (*History*, p. 279), seems to be part of that work (Abramowski, "Zu den Schriften," 10).

129. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 147 (Chap. LXXVI).

130. Maas, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean*, 20–25. A fragment of Michael's text is preserved, see Solomon of Basra, *The Book of the Bee*, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), qoph-nun-dalat to qoph-nun-he, trans. 135. See also Abramowski, "Zu den Schriften," 9.

131. Luise Abramowski and Allan E. Goodman, *A Nestorian Collection of Christological Texts, Cambridge University Library Ms. Oriental. 1319*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 18 (Syriac text), 19 (Introduction, translation, indices); (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 18:105–13, 19:61–65.

132. See summary, ibid. 19: xxxiv.

133. VHSN 279: Vööbus lists four manuscripts containing this text (BL Orient. 4071, fol 45b-59a; Ming. Syr. 566, 172b–175a (anonymous); Al-Qosh 65, cah 1–2; Ming. Syr. 547, fol. 1b–10a), but Vööbus seems to be unaware of the fact that Ming. Syr. 547 is a copy of Al-Qosh 65 (=MS 52 Notre-Dame des Sémences) and that the anonymous text found in Ming. Syr. 566 is not the same as the one in Ming. Syr. 547, which significantly is one of the manuscripts preserving the *Cause* as well as other important school literature. Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*, Introduction.

134. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 510–11. On Barḥadbešabba in general, see Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*, Introduction.

135. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 169 (Chap. XCIII).

*Chapter 5. The Scholastic Genre*

1. Ilaria Ramelli, "Linee introdutive a Barhadbeshabba di Halwan, *Causa della fondazione delle scuole.* Filosofia e storia della filosofia greca e cristiana in Barhadbeshabba," *'Ilu, Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 9 (2004): 127–81. Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth'," 81–87 discusses the text, as does Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch,* 63–65, which provides a useful summary of the whole. See also Theresia Hainthaler, "Die verschiedenen Schulen, durch die Gott die Menschen lehren wollte. Bemerkungen zur ostsyrischen Schulbewegung," in ed., Martin Tamcke, *Syriaca II. Beiträge zum 3. deutschen Syrologen-Symposium in Vierzehnheiligen 2002,* Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte 33 (Münster: LIT, 2004), 175–92. Aside from Scher's translation of the *Cause,* there is now one by Ilaria Ramelli, "Barhadbeshabba di Halwan, Causa della Fondazíone delle Scuole: Tradizíone e note essenziali,"*'Ilu, Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 10(2005), as well as my own in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis.*

2. For an excellent discussion of the development of Syriac rhetoric, see Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface.*

3. *Cause* 327.1–330.5.

4. Ibid. 330.6–333.7.

5. Ibid. 333.8–334.15.

6. Ibid. 335.1–337.6.

7. Ibid. 337.7–339.14.

8. Ibid. 340.1–341.7.

9. Ibid. 341.8–342.11.

10. Ibid. 342.12–344.7.

11. Ibid. 344.8–345.6.

12. Ibid. 345.7–345.14.

13. Ibid. 346.1–347.9.

14. Ibid. 347.10–348.3.

15. Ibid. 348.4–350.5. This passages is discussed in detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

16. Ibid. 350.6–352.4.

17. Ibid. 352.5–354.5.

18. Ibid. 354.6–356.5.

19. Ibid. 356.6.

20. Ibid. 356.6–359.12.

21. Ibid. 359.13–362.12.

22. Ibid. 362.13–367.9.

23. Ibid. 367.10.

24. Ibid. 367.13–368.1.

25. Ibid. 373.3–374.12.

26. Ibid. 375.1–376.9.

27. Ibid. 376.10–381.4.

28. Ibid. 381.5–383.14.

29. Ibid. 384.1–393.3.

30. Ibid. 393.4–394.13.

31. Ibid. 395.1–396.8.

32. Ibid. 396.9–397.2.

33. Ibid. 327.1–333.7.

34. Ibid. 333–352.4.

35. Ibid. 352.5–362.12.

36. Ibid. 362.13–367.9.
37. Ibid. 367.10–381.4.
38. Ibid. 381.5–393.3.
39. Ibid. 393.4–397.2.
40. Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis,* Introduction.
41. Ibid.
42. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations.* See also William Macomber, "The Theological Synthesis of Cyrus of Edessa, an East Syrian Theologian of the Mid-Sixth Century," OCP 30 (1964): 5–28, 363–84.
43. Baumstark, "Die nestorianischen Schriften 'De causis festorum'," 324–34 summarizes these texts.
44. See Carr's text of Thomas of Edessa, *On the Birth of Christ.* On this text, see Bettiolo, "Scuola ed Economia Divina nella Catechesi della Chiesa di Persia." Thomas's *On the Epiphany* remains in manuscript form. See also VHSN 173–74.
45. Scher, ed., *Traités,* 15–52. See also VHSN 175.
46. Ibid. 53–82.
47. VHSN 177 n. 171
48. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 2: VII.
49. Ibid. 2:V–VII.
50. Īšō'yahb I, *On the Trisagion.*
51. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 2:VII–X.
52. See, e.g., the discussion in J. F. Coakley, "The *Explanations of the Feasts* of Moše Bar Kepha," in *Symposium Syriacum IV,* 403–10.
53. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 2:XII; see also the English translation of this text, Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides,* trans. Godfrey R. Driver and Leonard Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925).
54. For example, see the discussion of the philosophical prologue's influence on the Syriac preface in Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface,* 39–68.
55. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 2:VI n. 9: *On the Pascha* I.6; *On the Fast* intr.4; II, 6; *On the Passion* I,4; II.2.
56. See respectively ibid. n. 10 (*On the Resurrection* intr 2.) and ibid. n. 11. Thomas of Edessa, *On the Birth of Christ,* 7 (Syriac), 15 (Latin).
57. E.g., Scher, ed., *Traités,* 16.10 (Īšai, *On the Martyrs*).
58. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 166 (Chap. LXXXIX); 170 (Chap. XLV); 176 (Chap. CIX); 201 (Chap. CXXXIV).
59. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 83–84 (Chap. LIX).
60. Ibid. 86 (Chap. LXIII).
61. Ibid. 95 (Chap. LXVI).
62. Ibid. 96.
63. Ibid. 97. Assemani notes concerning this work in n. 5: "idest, Apologeticum." cf. Brock, "Syriac Writers from Beth Qatraye," 89–92, esp. 90.
64. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 103 (Chap. LXVIII).
65. Ibid. 172 (Chap. XCIX).
66. Ibid. 215 (Chap. CXLV).
67. Ibid. 229 (Chap. CLXIII).
68. Baumstark, "Die nestorianischen Schriften 'De causis festorum'"; see also comments at Bettiolo, "Scuola ed Economia Divina nella Catechesi della Chiesa di Persia," 149–51.
69. Baumstark, "Die nestorianischen Schriften 'De causis festorum,'" 336, 337 respectively; "dogmatics": 339–42.
70. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 2:VI (quoted by Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface,* 137).
71. Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface,* 137.

72. John W. Watt, "Greek Historiography and the 'Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite'," in Reinink and Klugkist, eds., *After Bardaisan*, 322.

73. There is also the rhetorical "cause," which may be related, see Georg Wissowa, ed., *Paulys Real-Encyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1903–78), 9: 404–24. With regard to the different types of questions, Quintilian states: "Finitae [quaestiones] autem sunt ex complexu rerum personarum temporum ceterorumque; hae *hypothésis* a Graecis dicuntur, causae a nostris. In his omnis quaestio videtur circa res personasque consistere." *Institutiones Oratoriae*, ed. M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), vol. 1, 3.5.7. In general, see ibid. 3.5.

74. For example, in his treatise Īšō'yahb I states that he will inquire into the *trishagion*'s "cause, its history, and at the same time its interpretation," Īšō'yahb I, *On the Trisagion*, 690.14–15.

75. God as "cause of all" in *Cause* 334.4; 338.10. But note the usage in the East-Syrian creed, e.g., Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 138.

76. Job of Edessa, *Encyclopædia of Philosophical and Natural Sciences as Taught in Baghdad About A.D. 817; or, Book of Treasures*, ed. and trans. A. Mingana (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1935). This book shows strong etiological interests, although its title would tie it to another genre requiring closer study, the "Book of Treasures." An instance of this genre is attributed to Barḥadbĕšabbā 'Arbāyā at 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue*, 169 (Chap. XCIII). For the *Causa Causarum*, see C. Kayser, ed., *Das Buch der Erkenntniss der Wahrheit, oder, Der Ursache aller Ursachen* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1889); German translation: K. Kayser, trans., *Das Buch der Erkenntniss der Wahrheit* (Strassburg : K.J. Trübner, 1893); for a translation of an excerpt of this text, see Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, 263–66. On this understudied text, see G. J. Reinink, "Communal Identity and the Systematisation of Knowledge in the Syriac 'Cause of All Causes'," in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts, Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1–4 July 1996*, ed. Peter Brinkley (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 276–88.

77. See McLeod's 1979 edition of this collection (Narsai, *Metrical Homilies on Festivals*).

78. The titles of the other manuscripts, some of them lost, would need to be verified, if this is even possible. See discussion of the manuscripts in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis*.

79. Scher seems to take the *seyame* over the word *eskōlē* as a plural marker. Although this diacritical mark usually has this function, it is used here, as with other Greek loan words, to mark the ē vowel (since this vowel is common to many plural forms).

80. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue*, 148 (Chap. LXXIX); Assemani adds in note 3. (*De Causa Sessionum*, non Judiciorum, ut male Ecchellen and Hottinger). The same confusion occurs in the assessment of the meaning of the term yeshivah/metivta in Jewish sources.

81. Ibid. 170 (Chap. XCIV).

82. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 127; trans. by Scher as "la Cause de la fondation des écoles."

83. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue*, 167 (Chap. XC). Assemani has a note here on *mawtbā* being a liturgical term for parts of psalmody. See VHSN 123–29 on Elisha's literary activity.

84. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116; trans. by Scher as "un traité sur la Cause de la fondation des écoles."

85. Syriac waw-'ayin looks like a mīm. Vööbus (VHSN 128, 142) is not explicit about the logic behind his translations of the two Arabic titles found in the

*Chronicle.* He correctly takes *wadʿ* and *tartīb* to be equivalents of the Syriac *syām* and is not concerned about the absence of the word "cause" from the second reference. Furthermore, it is not clear why he continues to follow Scher's translation of *syām mawtbā* as "foundation," which is inaccurate.

86. VHSN 142; as Scher and Vööbus note, Assemani's manuscript was faulty here and thus has a corrupt text: ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue,* 71 (Chap. LV). See *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 116 n. 2 where Scher rejects Assemani's reading of "mawtbē" as *kathísmata* of the Psalter.

87. E.g., *Syriac and Arabic Documents,* 169.

88. E.g., ibid. 188. For a list of this category and how it changes, see W. Baars, "Peshitta Institute Communications V: On the order of books in a Beth Mawtabhe," *Vetus Testamentum* 17 (1967): 132–33.

89. *Statutes,* 79, 107.

90. Fundamental to this perspective is Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia.* See more recently Rubenstein, "The Rise of the Babylonian Rabbinic Academy."

91. *law šḥīmāʾīt:* This could also be rendered as "not without forethought." However, *šḥīmā* means not just "ordinary, common, simple, mere, rude, awkward," but can also mean "lay" or "secular."

92. *Cause* 393.4–394.7. The final saying—whether the author knows this or not it is unclear—was commonly attributed to Socrates in antiquity.

93. *Cause* 396.1–8.

94. Augustine, *Confessions* III.4.

95. Dirk M. Schenkeveld, "Philosophical Prose," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.–A.D. 400,* ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Brill, 1997), 204. "A distinction is often made between protreptic as giving general arguments for changing one's conduct and paraenesis, which consists of a series of concrete rules of conduct. The difference between the two seems related to two stages the prospective student has to go through: first he must be won for philosophy, then he is told how to continue his new life." On protreptic and paraenesis, see ibid. 204–13.

96. Ibid. 4.

97. Ibid. 209–10 (Greek text, section 1); he notes that Festugière argues rather that it is isagogic. Other late antique examples include Porphyry's *To Marcella,* Iamblichus's *Protreptikos eis philosphían,* and Themistius's *Protreptic Towards Philosophy for the People of Nicomedia* (ibid., 211–13).

98. This text is preserved in British Library Add. 14658 from the seventh century, but the translation must derive from before this. For the published text, see Paul de Lagarde, *Analecta Syriaca* (Lepizig: Teubner; London: Williams and Norgate, 1858, repr. Osnabrück: O. Zeller, 1967), 134–58.

99. Paul the Persian, *Introduction to Logic,* 1.1–4.25 (Syriac) / 1–5 (Latin).

100. Schenkeveld, "Philosophical Prose," 230–31.

101. See John W. Watt, "Antony of Tagrit on Rhetorical Figures," in *Symposium Syriacum IV,* 317–25; idem, "Syriac Panegyric in Theory and Practice: Antony of Tagrit and Eli of Qartamin," LM 102 (1989): 271–98.

102. Marcello Gigante, *Philodemus in Italy: The Books from Herculaneum* (trans. Dirk Obbink; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 20–23; see p. 115 for bibliographical references to the editions and translations.

103. See also T. Dorandi, ed., *Filodemo, Storia dei Filosofi [.] . Platone e l'Academia,* La Scuola di Epicuro 12 Naples Bibliopolis, 1991).

104. The most obvious instance of this appears when the *Cause* employs terms that we find, for example, in one of the Syriac translations of the epitome of the

*Life of Aristotle.* This text tells of how Speusippus "received" (*qabbel*) the "dwelling" (*duyyārā*) of Plato, and twice employs the expression "to stand at the head of the dwelling" (Syriac Vita II, Baumstark, *Aristoteles bei den Syrern,* gamal lines 2, 3, 4 respectively). Similar idioms appear in the *Cause* at 363.10–11 and 368.11. This similarity to the *Cause,* as well as its repeated use of the Greek word *scholé,* suggests that the origin of the *Cause*'s diadochic language lies at least in part in the translated Greek philosophical material.

105. BGSL 58–60.

106. Elias Bi[c]kerman[n], "La Chaîne de la tradition pharisienne."

107. Mishnah *Avot* 1:3, 1:4, 1:6, 1:8, 1:10, 1:12, 2:8.

108. See the discussion in Amram Tropper, "Mishnah *Avot* and Christian Succession Lists," in Becker and Reed, eds., *Ways That Never Parted,* 165–71, 177–87. See also idem, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 157–88, 208–40, where the author builds on insights from this earlier article.

109. m. *Peah* 2:6, m. *'Eduyot* 8:7, m. *Yadayim* 2:6, cf. Tropper, "Mishnah *Avot* and Christian Succession Lists," 164.

110. *Cause* 364.10–11; cf. "When Plato died, Speusippus, because he was his nephew, received (*qabbel (h)wā*) the residence of Plato, and he sent for Aristotle that he might stand at the head of the residence of Plato," Baumstark, *Aristoteles bei den Syrern,* gamal lines 1–3.

111. Patricia Cox Miller, "Strategies of Representation in Collective Biography," in Hägg and Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity,* 215. The quotation is from Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), xii, 152–53.

112. Ibid. 221.

113. Ibid.

114. Fowden, "Religious Communities," 87–88.

115. See, for example, Derek Krueger, "Typological Figuration in Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Religious History* and the Arts of Postbiblical Narrative," JECS 5, 3 (1997): 393–419.

116. Cameron, "Remaking the Past," in Bowersock et al., eds., *Late Antiquity,* 2.

117. Cf. Reinink, "Babai the Great's Life of George."

118. For a text with translation, see *The Iggeres of Rav Sherira Gaon,* trans. Nosson Dovid Rabinowich (Jerusalem: Ahavath Torah Institute, 1988).

119. Damascius, *The Philosophical History,* ed. and trans. Polymnia Athanassiadi (Athens: Apamea, 1999).

120. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy,* 306–15.

*Chapter 6. The Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the School of Nisibis*

1. Narsai, *On the Three Doctors,* 14: 473.14–19.

2. Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 127.

3. Becker, "The Dynamic Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Sixth Century."

4. Wolska, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustès,* 63–85.

5. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography,* II.2–5

6. For Theodore's influence on the Latin tradition via the School of Nisibis, see the scholarship on Junillus Africanus. However, the question of Junillus's dependence on Theodore remains unsettled, with some scholars following Kihn,

who argued for a complete reliance (Heinrich Kihn, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten*) and others relying more on the position of Devreesse, who limited this dependence. See Robert Devreesse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, Studi e Testi 141 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica, 1948), 273–74.

7. See comments at Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth'," 84–85 as well as discussion in Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 63; Macina, "L'homme à l'école de Dieu," 32: 268–71.

8. See Lucas Van Rompay, "Past and Present Perceptions of Syriac Literary Tradition," *Hugoye* 3, 1 (2000). Such a loss due to the translation process is addressed in Chapter Nine with regard to the "Egyptianization" of monasticism in the East.

9. See, e.g., discussion in Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 52–66.

10. For a discussion of this material, see Andrea B. Schmidt, "The Literary Tradition of Gregory of Nazianzus in Syriac Literature and its Historical Context," *The Harp* 11–12 (1998–99): 127–34.

11. Brock has several articles on Syriac translation; see in general, Brock, "Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity."

12. For the monasteries of Kallinikos, see Manfred Krebernik, "Schriftfunde aus Tell Bi'a 1990," *Mitteilungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft zu Berlin* 123 (1991), 51–57.

13. See, e.g., BGSL 186–89.

14. Taylor, "St. Basil the Great and the Syrian Christian Tradition," 49–58.

15. E.g., the Syriac translation in D. G. K. Taylor, ed. and trans., *The Syriac Versions of the De Spiritu Sancto by Basil of Caesarea*, CSCO 576–77 (Louvain: Peeters, 1999).

16. Taylor, "St. Basil the Great and the Syrian Christian Tradition," 57.

17. See the discussion of the Syriac and Armenian versions of this text in Robert W. Thomson, "The Syriac and Armenian Versions of the Hexameron of Basil of Caesarea," ed. E. A. Livingstone, SP 27 (Louvain; Peeters, 1993), 113–17.

18. On their meeting see *Life of Ephrem* 643.11.–649.10. In general, also see Amar, "The Syriac 'Vita' Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian."

19. Taylor, "St. Basil the Great and the Syrian Christian Tradition," 53.

20. In fact, the number of similarities shared by the *Cause* and Eznik of Kolb's *On God*, such as the reliance on Theodore of Mopsuestia, anti-pagan and anti-Zoroastrian material, and a philosophically tinged patristic language about God, reflects Eznik's fifth-century Edessene context and the *Cause*'s fifth-century Edessene background. See also Lucas Van Rompay, "Eznik de Kolb et Theodore de Mopsueste. R propos d'une hypothcse de Louis Marics," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 15 (1985): 159–75.

21. For the text of Jacob on Creation, see Jacob of Sarug, *Homilies*, 3:1–151. See also the English translation of the homily on first day of Creation: R. D. Young in J. W. Trigg, *Message of the Fathers of the Church* (Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1988): 184–202; see also Taeke Jansma, "L'Hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," OS 4 (1959): 3–42; 129–62, 253–84. For Jacob's anthropology and view of creation, see B. M. B. Sony, "Hymne sur la création de l'homme de l'hexaméron de Jacques de Saroug," PdO 11 (1983): 167–200 and idem, "L'anthropologie de Jacques de Saroug," PdO 12 (1984/5): 153–85.

22. Theodore's name was invoked in synods from the late sixth century onwards. For example, see Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 127, 130, and 135.

23. See F. Martin's edition (Narsai, *On the Three Doctors*).

24. For a discussion of the rhetorical background of this text, see Kathleen

McVey, "The Memra of Narsai on the Three Nestorian Doctors as an Example of Forensic Rhetoric," in *Symposium Syriacum III*, 87–96. See also comments at Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 130 n. 27. On the reception of Nestorius into Syriac, see Abramowski, *Untersuchungen zum Liber Heraclides des Nestorius*.

25. *Cause* 378.8–379.11. See the discussion of this passage in the following chapter.

26. See R. B. Ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis," in Frishman and Van Rompays, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, 125–42.

27. Van Rompay, "Quelques remarques sur la tradition syriaque." Note that the Synod of 486, which has been interpreted as evidence for the Nestorianization of the Church of the East, was merely reiterating the traditional Antiochene-Syrian anti-Theopaschite Christology; cf. Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 126 and 130. On links between Theodore's theology and the Syriac milieu, see H. J. W. Drijvers, "Early Forms of Antiochene Christology After Chalcedon," in Laga et al., eds., *After Chalcedon*, 99–113; repr. in H. J. W. Drijvers, *History and Religion in Late Antique Syria* (Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1994).

28. See for example Luise Abramowski, "Über die Fragmente des Theodor von Mopsuestia in Brit. Libr. add. 12.156 und das doppelt überlieferte christologische Fragment," OC 79 (1995): 1–8.

29. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 30–35 (Chap. XIX).

30. See discussion and references in George Kalantzis, "Theodore of Mopsueastia's Commentaries in Evangelium Iohannis Apostoli, Text and Transmission," *Augustinianum* 43 (2003): 473–93, esp. 482–85.

31. Théodore de Mopsueste, *Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes: (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138–148)*, ed. Lucas van Rompay, CSCO 435–36 (Louvain: Peeters, 1982). On the influence of this text, see Clemens Leonhard, *Ishodad of Merw's Exegesis of the Psalms 119 and 139–147: A Study of His Interpretation in the Light of the Syriac Translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary*, CSCO 587 (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), esp. 18–24, 242–45.

32. Peter Bruns, *Den Menschen mit dem Himmel verbinden: Eine Studie zu den katechetischen Homilien des Theodor von Mopsuestia* (Louvain: Peeters, 1995); Simon Gerber, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und das Nicänum: Studien zu den katechetischen Homilien* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

33. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *In epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii*, ed. H. B. Swete, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1880–82), on Gal 2:15–16 (I:24–32) provides an excellent summary of his thought.

34. Richard A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ: A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 128–29.

35. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 61.

36. Frances M. Young, "The Rhetorical Schools and Their Influence on Patristic Exegesis," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 188–93. For a general discussion of the relationship between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis, see Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 161–213. Young builds on suggestions made in Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese*. On Antiochene method in general also see Lucas Van Rompay, "Antiochene Biblical Interpretation: Greek and Syriac," in Frishman and Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, 103–23.

37. Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading*

*and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1–43, and David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 23–72.

38. R. B. Ter Haar Romeny, "Eusebius of Emesa's Commentary on Genesis, " in Frishman and Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation,* 141–42.

39. Examples of this "historical" approach are myriad. For example, see the introductory comments in Theodore's commentary on Ecclesiastes, W. Strothmann, *Syrische Katenen aus dem Ecclesiastes-Kommentar des Theodor von Mopsuestia: syrischer Text mit vollständigem Wörterverzeichnis* (Göttinger Orientforschungen I. Reihe, Syriaca ; Bd 29; Wiesbaden, 1988), 1–2.

40. For divine *paideia,* see Ulrich Wickert, *Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia als Beitrag zum Verständnis der antiochenischen Theologie,* Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 27 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1962), 89–101; Macina, "L'homme à l'école de Dieu," passim.

41. See Alphonse Mingana, ed., *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene Creed,* Woodbrooke Studies 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932) and idem, ed., *Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Lord's Prayer and on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist,* Woodbrooke Studies 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

42. For example, see ibid., 129–30 (Syriac), 27–28 (English).

43. Judith Frishman, "Themes on Genesis 1–5 in Early East-Syrian Exegesis," in Frishman and Van Rompay, eds., *Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation,* 178.

44. See, for example, *Statutes,* 61–63.

45. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 96 (text 109.26–110.7).

46. Ibid. 107 (text: 122.9–21); see also Syriac 9.1–27, Version 8 (note on line 19 *bēt nuppāqā*).

47. *Cause* 344.12–13.

48. Ibid., 329.11–13.

49. Ibid., 330.15–17.2.

50. Or, "in various generations."

51. *Cause* 331.4–9.

52. Ibid., 331.10–12.

53. See the portion of the *Cause* commented upon in Chapter Seven.

54. *Cause* 347.10–348.3.

55. Narsai, *Homilies on Creation,* I.351, IV.224; Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography,* II.88.

56. *Cause* 350.9–11; Narsai, *Homilies on Creation,* I.230ff. On this tradition, cf. Gary A. Anderson, "The Fall of Satan in the Thought of St. Ephrem and John Milton," *Hugoye* 3.1 (2000).

57. In general, see McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition;* note his comment at 71 n. 107. For a discussion that ties Theodore's notion of the divine image to the philosophical material to be addressed in the following chapter, see Teixidor, *Aristote en Syriaque,* 45–50.

58. *Cause* 346.1–347.4.

59. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography,* IX. 3, 13–14; Narsai, *Homilies on Creation,* II. 388–9; VI 133–54; as from Theodore, see Gignoux's comments in Narsai, *Homilies on Creation,* 487–88.

60. Joshua 10:12 at III.59 and 2 Kings 20:11 at Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography,* VIII:15.

61. Wolska, *Topographie chrétienne*, 37–61, 98–105 passim. See passages cited in the index: Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, III.408–10.

62. See the numerous passages cited in the index: Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, III.401–402. Cf. Cyrus of Edessa, *Explanations*, Ascension II.4 (140–1, English: 124) for a similar notion of the firmament.

63. The meaning of *'law(hy)* here is unclear.

64. *Cause* 348.4–13; See Narsai, *Homilies on Creation*, I.103 for the expression "wide house."

65. The most significant collection of Syriac fragments of Theodore's commentary on Genesis is Sachau's edition (Theodore, *Fragments*). Fragments can also be found in Raymond M. Tonneau, "Théodore de Mopsueste. Interprétation (du Livre) de la Genèse," LM 66 (1953): 45–64, and Taeke Jansma, "Théodore de Mopsueste, interprétation du livre de la Genèse. Fragments de la version syriaque (B.M. Add. 17,189, fol. 17–21)," LM 75 (1962), 63–92. Quotations from the Greek text can be found in the *Catenae* tradition as well as in the refutation of Theodore's ideas in John Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi.*

66. Theodore, *Fragments*, 4.18–19.

67. See use of *peḥmā* in Ibid. 1.15, 2.3, 2.8 (contrast *Cause* 335.3).

68. Ibid. 1–4.

69. Narsai, *Homilies on Creation*, II 250–54.

70. Ibid., II 352–57.

71. *Cause* 348.6.

72. *Statutes*, 51, 83, 88, 92, and 104.

73. Kirsti B. Copeland, "The Earthly Monastery and the Transformation of the Heavenly City in Late Antique Egypt," in Boustan and Reed, eds., *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, 142–58.

*Chapter 7. Spelling God's Name with the Letters of Creation*

1. *Cause* 363.7–367.2.

2. Cf. Baumstark, *Aristoteles bei den Syrern*, beth-gamal for texts and 1–130 for analysis, although this is now obsolete, as is Anton-Hermann Chroust, "A Brief Summary of the Syriac and Arabic Vitae Aristotelis," *Acta Orientalia* (Hauriae) 29 (1965–66): 23–47. See also Diether R. Reinsch, "Das Griechische Original der Vita Syriaca I des Aristoteles," *Rheinisches Museum* 125 (1982): 106–12 and Ingemar Düring, *Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition* (Göteborg: Elanders, 1957), 184–87, 469–70. But also note the comments on Düring's work in Dimitri Gutas, "The Spurious and the Authentic in the Arabic Lives of Aristotle," in *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts*, ed. Jill Kraye, W. F. Ryan, and Charles B. Schmitt, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 11 (London: Warburg Institute, 1986), 15–36 repr. in Gutas, *Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition.*

3. The most recent and detailed studies are Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque* (2004), which is a collection of his works from over fifteen years, and Teixidor, *Aristote en Syriaque*, which also briefly treats the *Cause* (pp. 56–57).

4. The *Organon* consists of the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, and *Prior Analytics* I.1–7.

5. *Cause* 333.8–345.6.

6. Rubens Duval, *Histoire politique, religieuse et littéraire d'Édesse jusqu'à la première croisade* (Paris, 1892); originally JA ser. 8 vol. 18 (1891) (repr. Amsterdam: Philo,

1975), 180; Hayes, *École d'Édesse*, 144–72; VHSN 21–24; Nabil el-Khoury, "Auswirkungen der Schule von Nisibis," OC 59 (1975): 121–29; Drijvers, "The School of Edessa," 51. A recent example can be found in Erica Hunter, "The Transmission of Greek Philosophy via the 'School of Edessa,'" in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring (Boston: Brill, 2002), 225–39.

7. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 85 (Chap. LXI); Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation," 26; see also Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, 47. This misreading seems to have begun with Assemani (ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue*, 85). On Probus's translation work (despite questionable dating), see Harald Suermann, "Die Übersetzung der Probus und eine Theorie zur Geschichte der syrischen Übersetzung griechischer Texte," OC 74 (1990): 103–14.

8. Jerome, *Epistles*, 50.1 has been used as evidence for the *Isagoge* as part of the syllabus at Antioch by the 370s. Jerome, *Correspondence*, ed. Jérôme Labourt (Paris: Budé, 1951), 2: 150–51.

9. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition*, 17.

10. See discussion in Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, esp. 169–76, and the earlier study, Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese*.

11. The standard early work on Sergius is Anton Baumstark, *Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894), 358–84. Now see the several works collected in Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 123–231.

12. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation," 22.

13. *Life of Abā*, 218.2.

14. Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography*, II.2–5.

15. Wolska, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustès*, 147–92; see the editor's comments at John Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi*, 1:58–59.

16. The text can be found in Kihn, *Theodor von Mopsuestia und Junilius Africanus als Exegeten*. For a more recent translation into English, see Maas, *Exegesis and Empire in the Early Byzantine Mediterranean*. See also Becker, "The Dynamic Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Sixth Century."

17. This is a different Paul from the logician. There are in fact four Pauls; see Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy," 238–39 n. 14. The philosophical material in Junillus's text resembles much of what we find in the School of Nisibis at this time.

18. For Cassiodorus' similar philosophical interests, see P. G. Walker, "Cassiodorus Teaches Logic Through the Psalms," in *Nova et Vetera: Patristic Studies in Honor of Thomas Patrick Halton*, ed. J. Petruccione (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1998), 226–34. On Cassiodorus and the School of Nisibis, see Robert Macina, "Cassiodore et l'école de Nisibe. Contribution à l'étude de la culture chrétienne orientale à l'aube du Moyen Âge," LM 95 (1982): 131–66; however, his claims are refuted in Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Cassiodorus and the School of Nisibis," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985): 135–37.

19. Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface*, 39–72.

20. L. G. Westerink, "Philosophy and Medicine in Late Antiquity," *Janus* 51 (1964): 169–77. However, see the comments in M. Roueché, "Did Medical Students Study Philosophy in Alexandria?" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 43 (1999): 153–69. For medical study at the School of Nisibis, see VHSN 283, 285–86.

21. Again, for text, see Paul the Persian, *Introduction to Logic*. For a close study of this text, see Teixidor, *Aristote en Syriaque* and Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 233–54.

22. For an extremely learned assessment of this issue as well as a history of the question, see Joel Walker, "The Limits of Late Antiquity: Philosophy Between Rome and Iran," *Ancient World* 33, 1 (2002): 56–67. See also his excellent treatment of philosophy in the Sasanian Empire in Walker, *Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, 164–204, and the discussion of the reception of the Hermetica in Sasanian Iran in Van Bladel, *Hermes Arabicus*, 27–82.

23. Michel Tardieu, "Sâbiens coraniques et Sâbiens de Harran," JA 274 (1986): 1–44; see also Miller, "Sargis of Reš'aina: On What the Celestial Bodies Know"; Ilsetraut Hadot, "The Life and Work of Simplicius in the Greek and Arabic Sources," in Sorabji, ed., *Aristotle Transformed*, 280–89 for summary of Tardieu's thesis. See also Pierre Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, trans. B. A. Archer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 139–41. For Harran including the study of philosophy there, see Tamara Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

24. For the contents see Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, III:1154–60.

25. See the book review of R. Thiel, *Simplikios und das Ende der neuplatonischen Schule in Athen* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1999) by C. Luna, *Mnemosyne* 54 (2001): 482–504. Thiel accepts Tardieu's thesis with some qualifications, while Luna devotes the vast majority of the review to critiquing it. For the most recent discussion of the Ṣābians of Harran, see Van Bladel, *Hermes Arabicus*, 83–127.

26. Brock, "The Syriac Commentary Tradition."

27. See the biographical material in the life in John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, 17: 137–58 (Chapter X).

28. See relevant discussion in Becker, "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*," 387–91.

29. British Library, Add. 14658 (7th century); on the different versions of the *Categories* in Syriac, see Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 23–37, and Brock, "The Syriac Commentary Tradition." Unfortunately, the only detailed study of the several versions deals with that of Jacob of Edessa from the late seventh century, Khalil Georr, *Les Catégories d'Aristote dans leurs versions syro-arabes* (Beyrouth: Institut Français de Damas, 1948).

30. E.g., remarks at Bowersock et al., eds., *Late Antiquity*, 606.

31. The dialogue genre of the one fully extant work associated with the circle of Bardaiṣan clearly reveals its philosophical background (Bardaiṣan, *"The Book of the Laws of the Countries" or "Dialogue on Fate"*). The most significant work on Bardaiṣan is Drijvers, *Bardaiṣan of Edessa*. On the Greek philosophical background of Ephrem, see Possekel, *Evidence of Greek Philosophical Concepts in the Writings of Ephrem the Syrian*.

32. Many of the fourth-century Greek patristic texts that would have been accessible in Syriac in fifth-century Edessa emphasize God's unknowablity due to their origin within the Arian controversy, e.g., British Library Add. 14567, a sixth-century manuscript containing John Chrysostom's *On the Incomprehensibility of God*; see F. Graffin and A.-M. Malingrey, "La tradition syriaque des homélies de Jean Chrysostome sur l'incomprehensibilité de Dieu," in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiquas offerts au cardinal Jean Daniélou*, ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser (Paris; Beauschesne, 1972), 603–9. See also the fifth-century Eznik of Kolb, *On God*, Chaps. 117–19.

33. *Cause* 349.1–13; the Syriac of the last line is awkward: *aršel šbaq ennōn da-b-hānā baytā rwīḥā d-bēt yullphānā d-men ar'ā* (349.12–13).

34. For Theodore's notion of analogy see the discussion on p. 139.

35. *Cause* 349.4: *šmā rabbā d-tuqqānēh da-rqī'ā.*

36. Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language," 322–28.

37. See brief discussion at William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 315.

38. Evagrius, *Letter to Melania*, 612; trans. *Letter to Melania* (English), 8 (repr. 278).

39. Ibid., 612; trans. 8–9 (repr. 278–79).

40. Ibid., 614; trans. 10 (repr. 280).

41. Ibid., 616; trans. 11 (repr. 281).

42. "As those who teach letters to children trace them on tablets, thus also Christ, teaching his wisdom to rational beings, has traced it in corporeal nature." Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* (English), 22. See also Evagrius of Pontus, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, 3.57 (p. 121); *Praktikos* 92 (trans. Sinkewicz 112).

43. E.g., *Cause* 352.11.

44. *Cause* 352.6.

45. This is clearly related to what we find in a similar passage in Sergius of Rēš'aynā's commentary on the Categories, Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 193–94.

46. *Cause* 334.1–6.

47. Ammonius, *In Categorias* 9.17–18 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 17). This line is then repeated by the later commentators, cf. Philoponus, *In Categorias* 9.14–15.

48. For a recent attempt to understand the *Categories* in their original context, see Wolfgang-Rainer Mann, *The Discovery of Things: Aristotle's* Categories *and Their Context* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

49. Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28. See also P. Hoffmann, "Catégories et langage selon Simplicius—La question du "skopos" d'un traité aristotélicien des 'Catégories'," in *Simplicius, Sa vie, son oeuvre, sa survie*, ed. Ilsetraut Hadot (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987): 61–90, and Strange, "Plotinus, Porphyry and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the 'Categories'."

50. See also *Cause* 333.10: *et'amrat 'law(hy)*.

51. Compare passages from Porphyry's *Isagoge* in its original Greek and the Syriac version: *katgorêsthai katá*, Greek 2.16=Syriac 4.6; Greek 2.17=Syriac 4.9; for *légesthai*, Greek 1.18=Syriac 2.10; Greek 2.17=Syriac 4.10. There are many examples of this in the *Isagoge*. See also Henri Hugonnard-Roche, "L'Organon: Tradition syriaque et arabe," in R. Goulet, ed., *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* 1 (Paris, 1989), 502–28.

52. Aristotle's key passage on semiotics, *De Interpretatione* 1, had been translated into Syriac by this time and is treated in Probus's Syriac commentary (Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, text: 62–90, notes and translation: 90–140). A tension exists in the *Cause* between an Aristotelian semiotics in which the sign is an arbitrary signifier of the signified and what may be termed a more traditional "Semitic" semiotics in which the name belongs to the thing in an essential way. This could reflect the dual semiotics of Ephrem, who argues that God puts on some names for our instruction while other names truly belong to him alone. See discussion in Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 60–66.

53. *Cause* 334.4; see Porphyry's *Isagoge* in the original Greek and the Syriac version: *horízesthai*, Greek 10.22=Syriac 24.11; Greek 11.7=Syriac 25.6; Greek 13.3=Syriac 29.10; *horismós*, Greek 1.5=Syriac 1.6 (Syriac *ṯḥūmā*); Greek 10.20=Syriac 25.21; also see the Syriac of *De Interpretatione* 21a34 in Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, 45.9, although this is a later translation.

54. *Cause* 334.4–6.

55. *mrakbā* (*Cause* 334.4) "composed"; *etrakbat* (*Cause* 334.6) "is composed."

56. For a general discussion of this issue, see Christopher Stead, "Divine Simplicity as a Problem of Orthodoxy," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 255–69.

57. Narsai, *Homilies on Creation*, II.29. In the same line he is described as *d-lā sākā*, "without end or limit," as in *Cause* 334.3.

58. *Cause* 333.10; on the creation of the human being, see Narsai, *Homilies on Creation* I.135, 146, 152, 161, 164, 167, 174; on God: 242, as opposed to the serpent 247. The human being as "composed" is commonplace.

59. Ammonius, *In Categorias* 35.18–36.3 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 46); Philoponus, *In Categorias* 27.10–32, describes how it is easier to know the complex as opposed to the simple, except in education, where one begins with the simple.

60. The *Organon* is the traditional title for Aristotle's logical works through *Prior Analytics* I.7.

61. *De Interpretatione* 16a12–16 (*New Aristotle Reader*, 12). For Probus's Syriac commentary on this, see Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, Syriac 69 (Latin 95); *Rakkeb* becomes even more important than the Greek *súnthesis* in the early translation of *De Interpretatione*, because it is used to render several Greek terms: Syriac 22.15 = *súnthesin* (16a12) for combination of subject and predicate; Syriac 22.17 = the same (16a14); Syriac 24.3 = *peplegménois* (16a24); Syriac 26.6 = *súnthesis* (16b24); Syriac 28.10 *mrakbā* = *súnthetos* (17a22); Syriac 26.14 = *diploîs* (16b32).

62. This process of increasing complexity is implicit in Aristotle's treatment: "Of these the one is a simple (*haplê*) statement, affirming or denying something of something, the other is compounded of simple statements and is a kind of composite (*súnthetos*) sentence." (17a20–22) (*New Aristotle Reader*, 14); for Probus's comments on this, see Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, Syriac 85 (Latin 108).

63. Ammonius, *In Categorias* 13.6–11 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 19–20); see Philoponus, *In Categorias* 10.25–12.3 on the *Organon* moving from simple to complex.

64. Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, 66.27 simple; 66.29 combined statement; 66.29–30 on *De Interpretatione* treating simple, not combined statements; 67.6 syllogism is combined; 67.18ff sequence of works.

65. Ibid., 69.20.

66. Philoponus, *In de Anima* on 430b3 (Philoponus, *On Aristotle on the Intellect*, 86).

67. Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, 22.15=*De Interpretatione* 16a12; the Greek term is *diaíresis*.

68. Elias, *In Isagogen* 37.31–37 (CAG 18.1; A. Busse, 1900).

69. For example, Ammonius states: "He put homonyms before synonyms, not because being is predicated homonymously of the ten categories, but because in a course of study simpler things should always come before those that are not as simple." Ammonius, *In Categorias* 16.19–21 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 23). See Ammonius, *In Analytica Priora* 5.5–32 on the practice of analysis and synthesis in grammar, physics, and philosophy. For the combination of matter and form, see John Philoponus, *In de Anima* on 429b10 (Philoponus, *On Aristotle on the Intellect*, 45–46).

70. The technical terms are *apprehensio simplex* and *adjectio simplex*, or the Greek, *epibolé*.

71. *Cause* 334.3–4.

72. Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 17a38–17b1 (*New Aristotle Reader*, 15); unfortunately Hoffmann does not include all of the early translation of *De Interpretatione* in his edition. At Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, 30.8 *gawwā* is used for *tò kathólou*, but this is from the later translation of George, Bishop of the Arabs.

73. Isagoge (Greek=Syriac): *tà kath' hékasta* 6.20=15.2 (*īḥīdāyā*); *tà katà méros* 6.21–2=15.5, 17.4; *tò kath hékaston* 6.22=15.6 (*īḥīdāyūtā*); *toû koinoû* 7.25=17.12 (*d-gawwā*); *tò koinón* 6.23=15.7 (*gawnāyūtā*). Words based on the Syriac word *kul* are also often used to express "universal."

74. *Cause* 334.7–8.

75. Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, lexicon and *De Interpretatione* 7. The word *īḥīdāyā* has a particularly rich prior usage in Syrian asceticism, see, for example, Griffith, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria," 223–29.

76. Ammonius, *In Categorias* 15.24–25 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 22–23). The more common understanding of synonym is known here as a "polyonym."

77. See, for example, Ammonius, *In Categorias* 6.8–10 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 39). For the various renderings of the terms "homonym" and "synonym" in different Syriac translations of the *Categories*, see Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 27.

78. Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, 82.1–2; Hoffmann suggests a Greek source for this example (note 120, p. 134). For a similar earlier example in Greek, see Ammonius, *In Categorias* 38.12–14 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 48–49).

79. A similar usage can be found below in the *Cause* at 337.11.

80. Theodore, *Fragments*, 1.15.

81. *Cause* 335.8, 10.

82. Jacob of Sarug, *Homilies*, 3:28.10–16, for God existing without name before creation, and 3:6.3–8, for God taking pleasure in himself ("On the Establishment of Creation, The First Day").

83. *Cause* 335.4, 7; in Greek, see, e.g., Ammonius, *In Categ*orias 31.1; 45.11.

84. *Cause* 336.1–337.3.

85. *Cause* 344.14; for examples of "property" in Greek and Syriac, see, e.g., Porphyry, *Isagoge*, 12.12–22 (Greek), 28.1–18 (Syriac).

86. Porphyry, *Isagoge*, 19.11–13. Trans. from *Isagoge*, trans. E. W. Warren (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1975), 48, 58–59.

87. *Cause* 336.1–2.

88. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 30: *zaw'ā* = *metabolé*.

89. *Physics* 218b21.

90. Much of this can be found in *Physics* Bk. 2; Ammonius, *In Categorias* 60.24–5 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 71): "For time is the measure of change."

91. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque*, 128.

92. *Physics* 192b21–3.

93. Furlani, "Due scoli filosofici attribuiti a Sergio di Teodosiopoli (Rêš'aynâ)," 140. This scholion is attributed to Sergius. I do not have access to the manuscript, but Furlani seems to be translating *kyānā* here.

94. Porphyry, *Isagoge* (Greek=Syriac): 16.2=35.16, 19.13=43.2.

95. There are several instances of this in Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, but from the later version of *De Interpretatione: akoloúthei* translated thus on p. 52; see also *naqqīphūtā* 48.12=*akoloúthesis* 22a14.

96. Porphyry, *Isagoge* (Greek=Syriac): 18.18–19=41.8.

97. Ibid. (Greek=Syriac): 16.14–15=37.3 and 37.5; *páresti* 22.2=47.14.

98. *Phaedrus* 248b. The mind is described as a horse at Evagrius, *Scholies aux Proverbes*, ed. Paul Géhin (Paris: Cerf, 1987), Prov 21.31 (#232, pp. 326–27).

99. See, for example, Vasiliki Limberis, "The Eyes Infected by Evil: Basil of Caesarea's Homily, On Envy," HTR 84 (1991): 163–84; however, the blindness is not here due to sin. See also the Tome of Proclus at Eduard Schwartz, ed., *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 4.2 (1914–): 192, for a similar phrase as in Eznik; for Neoplatonic examples of the blinding the eye of the soul, see Simplicius, *in de Caelo* 7.74.5 (CAG 7.1; ed. J. L. Heilberg, 1894); idem, *in Categorias* 8.8.5; the "eye of the soul" is common: e.g., Clement, *Paed.* 2.1.2, *to omma tēs psūchēs*, ed. M. Marcovich (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 66.5.

100. *Cause* 336.5; see Ps 25:4; 27:11; Prov 3:17; Is 42:16.

101. *Cause* 336.10.

102. The Syriac *yāt* is actually the archaic accusative marker used in the Peshitta of Gen 1:1. The form was not recognizable to Syriac exegetes, who interpreted it as cognate with *īt*. For example, see Ephrem's prose commentary on Genesis, 1:1, which is followed by many of the later exegetes; Antoine Guillaumont, "Genèse 1, 1–2 selon les commentateurs syriaques," in *IN PRINCIPIO: Interpretations des premiers versets de la Genèse*, Études Augustiniennes 152 (Paris: Études Augustiennes, 1973), 115–32. See also St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Selected Prose Works*, ed. Kathleen McVey, trans. Joseph P. Amar and Edward G. Mathews, Jr., Fathers of the Church 91 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 74 n. 20.

103. Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 222–34.

104. "Universal," *Cause* 337.9; see also *Cause* 334.7–8.

105. See the word "equal" in the translation. The masculine participle (*šāwē*) being used for a feminine noun (*brītā*) suggests that the word "name," "noun," or "word" (*šmā*), is understood here, thus following the usage of the previous sentence. The use of "equal" again with regard to "created" and "coming into being" (*Cause* 337.13) does not mean that these two terms are equal, but rather that they have many different and unequal things under them, things which share the name "created" and "coming into being," but have different definitions. The two words are treated as polyonyms by the text, i.e., having the same definition but different names. "But if they have their account in common but differ in name, they are called *polyonyms*, as is the case with *sword*, *scimitar*, and *sabre*." Ammonius, *In Categorias* 16.4–6 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 23).

106. For an edition with a long, useful introduction to the text, a French translation, and the Latin version of Boethius, see Porphyry, *Isagoge*, ed. Alain de Libera and A. Ph. Segonds (Paris: Vrin, 1998). See also the extensive commentary on the *Isagoge* by Jonathan Barnes, *Porphyry Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). For the Tree, see Porphyry, *Isagoge*, 4.21–25 (Greek); 9.26–10.8 (Syriac).

107. *Cause* 339.2–3.

108. Ibid. 339.7–9.

109. Ibid. 340.3–4, *l-maṣādū b-hāy ītūtā alāhāytā.*

110. Ibid. 340.4, *šrāgā lā meṭhazyānītā.*

111. Ibid. 341.6.

112. Ibid. 341.8–9.

113. Ibid. 341.9–11.

114. Philoponus, *In Analytica Priora* 32.17–18 (CAG 13.2; ed. M. Wallies, 1905): "For of the cognitive faculties some are logical, others are alogical, the logical ones are the mind, thought, and opinion; the alogical ones imagination and sensation."

115. For example, Ammonius, *In Analytica Priora,* 24.32–33. See editor's comment, Philoponus, *On Aristotle on the Intellect,* 16.

116. This can also be *noētikaí* or *theōrētikaí;* the equivalents are not always certain. There is also the possibility that the manuscript is corrupt at this point.

117. This is the translation of the Syriac word, not of the Greek original.

118. A. Van Hoonacker, "Le Traité du philosophe syrien Probus sur les premiers analytiques d'Aristote," JA ser. 9 vol. 16 (1900): 88. Probus does not divide these into logical and illogical. The text presents the five cognitive faculties as *hawnā, tarʿītā, ḥaylā meškḥānā, fantasyā* (Gr. *phantasía*), *regšā* (Gr. *aísthesis*) (the latter two being the nonlogical parts of the soul). His term for the Greek *dóxa,* "opinion," is *ḥaylā meškḥānā,* in contrast to the *Cause*'s *maḥšabtā.*

119. *De Anima* 414b2; Ammonius, *In Isagogen* 11.16–18. Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Gorgiam,* ed. L. G. Westerink (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970), 12.3.12–15; David, *Prolegomena philosophiae* 79.6ff (CAG 18.2; ed. Adolf Busse, 1904) goes through the five (three and two) and four (*proaíresis*), divides four into two; Alexander of Aphrodisias, *de Anima* 74.2 and 78.23 (CAG suppl. 2.1; ed. I. Bruns, 1887); also Ammonius, *In de Interpretatione* 5.1ff (CAG 4.5; ed. A. Busse, 1897); Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* On Interpretation 1–8, trans. D. Blank (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 14.

120. 99b1.16–107b.2.14; see Miller, "Sargis of Rešʿaina: On What the Celestial Bodies Know," 224.

121. *Cause* 341.13–4.

122. The Greek *hēníochos* is attested in Syriac as early as Ephrem (see Ephrem, *Sermons on Faith,* 3.464; 7.418). It shows up three times in the contemporary school text, Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* 9.16; 39.22; 42.16. Brock notes several instances of the *hawnā* and one where *madʿā* are described as *kubernḗtēs* (Isaac of Nineveh, *Second Part,* 17.12 note 3 in versio).

123. For example, see Anonymus, *In Categorias,* 14.32–15.3 (CAG 23.2; ed. M. Haydruckm, 1883). See Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi,* ed. Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyear (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964–82), 3: 584.6–22 on the separability of the soul from the body; Aristotle, *De Anima* 413a9 questions whether the soul in the body is like a sailor in a ship. See also Plotinus, *Enneads,* 4.3.21, on the soul in the body.

124. For example, Isaac of Nineveh, *Second Part,* 17.12, uses the same Syriac word for "crag" as the *Cause* in a similar metaphor for the intellect.

125. Ammonius, *In Isagogen* 11.16–8; 11.17 *zōtikaí* is synonym of *orektikaí;* also in Ammonius, *In de Interpr,* 5.1ff (see above).

126. Ammonius, *In Isagogen,* 6.6–7; Philoponus, *In Categorias,* 12.12.ff: Olympiodorus, *Prolegomena,* 22.8–12 (CAG 12.1; ed. A. Busse, 1902), one seeks the truth and the other seeks the good.

127. Philoponus, *In Anima* 15.520.21ff: parts of the soul (on Aristotle, *De Anima* 429a10).

128. Hugonnard-Roche, *La logique d'Aristote du grec au syriaque,* 191 and comments at 203–209.

129. *Cause* 342.6–342.11.

130. There are several examples in Isaac of Nineveh (e.g., *Second Part,* 5.14).

131. Note the terms used in *Cause* 342.6–8.

132. See for example the discussion of opposites in Aristotle, *De Generatione et Corruptione,* II.2.

133. This relationship is expressed with the Syriac word *nāqep* (343.3), the philosophical implications of which have already been addressed.

134. Ammonius, *In Isagogen* 6.6ff. Compare this passage to *Cause* 342:12–13: "For because all things which are doubly established in learning are divided into two kinds." See also Ammonius, *In Isagogen* 11.18–22.

135. Ammonius, *Proleg. In Categorias* 4.27–5.4 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 12–3); see also Ammonius, *In Categorias* 10.15–11.1 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 18).

136. Ammonius, *In Categorias* 13.5–6 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 19).

137. Simplicius, *In Categorias* 8.66ff (see the use of *télos*); 8.5.3–8.5.9; 14.19–22 (Note the passage on Circe and the need for logic to communicate).

138. "la logica è uno strumento, che distingue chiaramente nella scienza il vero dal falso e nella pratica definisce di nuovo il bene dal male." Giuseppe Furlani, "Sul trattato di Sergio di Rêsh'aynâ circa le categorie," *Rivista di Studi filosofici e religiosi* 3 (1922): 139; see also 141.

139. Hoffmann, *De Hermeneuticis*, Syriac 65.18–26, Latin 92.

140. *Cause* 343.12–14.

141. Trans. from Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, 204. The original Syriac of this text remains in ms. form. See also the prologue of Paul the Persian, *Introduction to Logic*, 1.1–4.25 (Syriac) / 1–5 (Latin).

142. Ammonius, *In Categorias* 15.4–10 (Ammonius, *On Aristotle's* Categories, 22).

143. *On Memory* 449b, 30–1 (*New Aristotle Reader*, 207); more broadly, see *De Anima* III.7.

144. *De Anima* 427a18–21.

145. Ibid., 431a14–19.

146. Ibid., 430a1.

147. *Cause* 344.8–345.6.

148. The debate as to whether logic is part of philosophy or merely an instrument of it is reiterated by the various commentators. See L. G. Westerink, "Elias on the Prior Analytics," *Mnemosyne* 14 (1961); repr. in idem, *Texts and Studies in Neoplatonism and Byzantine Literature: Collected Papers* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1980), 64–65, which lists the places that this discussion appears. All but Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Analytica Priora* 1.1.3–4.29 (CAG 2.1; ed. M. Wallies, 1891) are from the school of Ammonius.

149. *Cause* 352.7–354.5.

150. E.g., Jacob of Sarug, *Homilies*, 3:1.8; 6.15; 8.20. See also Narsai, *Homilies on Creation.*

151. Furlani, "Due scoli filosofici attribuiti a Sergio di Teodosiopoli (Rêš'aynâ)," 142–45.

152. Again, see, for example, Strange, "Plotinus, Porphyry and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the 'Categories'," and a number of the articles in Sorabji, *Aristotle Transformed.*

153. Robert A. Markus, "Marius Victorinus and Augustine," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 366.

154. Ibid.

155. "One might note here that the chief ancient rival to the doctrine of illumination is the Aristotelian idea of abstraction." Gareth B. Matthews, "Knowledge and Illumination," in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 181.

156. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 2–3.

157. Regarding the Incarnation, compare the image of the mind at *Cause* 344.8–9 to Christ as image of the divine essence in Hebrews 1.3.

158. Ephrem, *Hymns on Faith* 31 Stanza 2 (trans. from Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 60). Note the focus on the "children" of contemporary humans similar to, for example, *Cause* 336.10.

159. Javier Teixidor makes a similar point when he quotes Marūtā of Maypherkaṭ's statements on language from 410 and suggests that the development of the Syrian study of Aristotle's logic can be understood as a response to this (Teixidor, *Aristote en Syriaque*, 20).

160. Balzaretti, "Ancient Treatises on Syriac Homonyms."

161. Sebastian Brock, "The Transmission of Ephrem's *Madrashe* in the Syriac Liturgical Tradition" (SP 33; ed. E. A. Livingstone, 1997), 490–505.

162. *Cause* 378.8–379.11.

163. Ibid., 335.7.

*Chapter 8. A Typology of the East Syrian Schools*

1. See J.-M. Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus: Répertoires des dioceses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1993), 75.

2. British Library Add. 14460; Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, I:52–53; Hatch, *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*, 211. One wonders what the originally Latin "dux" means in this context.

3. BO III/2. 919–50.

4. For the text and French translation, see Īšō'dĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity*. For general discussions of Īšō'dĕnaḥ and the problems of authorship and dating, see BGSL 234; J.-M. Fiey, "Išô'dnah, métropolite de Basra, et son oeuvre" and Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It*, 211–13.

5. Fiey, "Išô'dnah," 438–47; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 212.

6. For a problematic, yet accessible, text and translation, see E. A. Wallis Budge's edition of the text, TMBG; see also BGSL 233–34; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It*, 213–15.

7. The text and French translation were produced by the same editor as the *Cause*, Addai Scher. For a general discussion and bibliography, see Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 443–46. Nautin argued that the author was Īšō'dĕnaḥ. Pierre Nautin, "L'auteur de la 'Chronique de Séert': Isho'denah de Basra," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 186 (1974): 113–26. Fiey throws this into doubt: J.-M. Fiey, "Īšō'dnāḥ et la Chronique de Séert," PdO 6–7 (1975–76): 447–59.

8. Louis R. M. Sako, "Les sources de la Chronique de Séert," PdO 14 (1987): 155–66.

9. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne*, III.95 ftnt 3.

10. For a summary based on all the sources, see Fiey, "Topographie chrétienne de Mahozé," 406–8.

11. For the School's masters as well as its famous students, see ibid. 407–8. Fiey notes that the School suffered from a period of decline from the ninth century onwards. For the later reforms of Sabrisho' II, see BO III:506–7 for the Catholicos' comments on the state of the schools during his tenure.

12. Mārī, *De Patriarchis*, 43 (Arabic), 37 (Latin).

13. There are references to Acacius being in Edessa at the same time as Barṣaumā and Narsai. McCullough makes a similar point (McCullough, *Short History of Syriac Christianity*, 157). Labourt questions the authenticity of the tradition that Acacius had an actual school (Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, 290–91).

14. VHSN 169–70.

15. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 165–66. VHSN 169 rejects this story but notes that it has been accepted by several scholars, n. 96.

16. One source, the extra portion of the *Cause* published by Mingana in his edition of Narsai's works, the authenticity of which is questionable, contains a description of how, after many students followed Mār Abā into exile when the School of Nisibis was temporarily closed, some members remained in other cities. Īšai and Rāmīšō' are mentioned in this context. Section VI, Narsai, *Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina,* ed. A. Mingana, I-II (Mosul: 1905), *integra narratio* 38. See also Fiey, "Mahozé," 407.

17. Note the numerous references to him as a teacher in the introduction (*Life of Abā,* 206f).

18. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 473.

19. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 167: In the same passage, the *Chronicle* cites the story of Mār Abā consoling the shah regarding his son, who has rejected the traditional form of Zoroastrian learning. Again we see how learning and controversy are closely intermingled. Furthermore, Abā's ability to speak freely before the king in this passage is noteworthy and perhaps fictitious.

20. For Īšai in general, see *Chronicle of Siirt,* 7: 157–58; for Īšai as exegete, see also ibid. 7: 187; VHSN 175. His extant work can be found in Scher, ed., *Traités,* 15–52. On his participation in selecting the Catholicos, see *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 192; see also VHSN 227.

21. Cf. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, eds., *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* IIIB: 527–641 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–), 850. Also, Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšō',* 30.

22. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 496–97; A later source suggests even closer relations between the Catholicos and the Roman emperor and reports this same story; Mārī, *De Patriarchis,* 59–60 (Arabic), 52–53 (Latin). On Bokhtīšō' as head, see *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 494.

23. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 518.

24. Scher, "Étude supplémentaire sur les écrivains syriens orientaux," 18. See also Brock, "Syriac Writers from Beth Qatraye," 90.

25. Ibid. 92.

26. Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature,* 187; cf. 'Amr ibn Mattā in 'Abdīšō''s *Catalogue,* 157 n. 2; see also his works in 'Abdīšō''s *Catalogue,* 157–58 (Chap. LXXXV); see also the "Lettre de Mar Aba II," ed. J. B. Chabot, *Actes du XIe congrès des Orientalistes* (Paris, 1897), 295–335 (see Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III. 170). For the late reestablishment of the School, see VHSN 325.

27. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 507 (The *Chronicle of Siirt* seems to conflate him with Gregory I, Catholicos 605–9; ibid., 13: 521 for his study under Īšai); see also Īšō'dĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 56 and Fiey, *Nisibe,* 58.

28. Cyrus of Edessa, *Six Explanations,* v–x (translation).

29. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* I.58–60.

30. *Chronicle of Arbela* 20.75.48–53, translation based on VHSN 205. Scher notes a dating problem with this passage: see *Chronicle of Siirt* 7:187 However, this reflects the great confusion concerning Paul; see Gutas, "Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy," 238–9 n. 14.

31. 'Amr ibn Mattā in 'Abdīšō''s *Catalogue,* 86 n. 1.

32. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 508.

33. Īšō'dĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 56.

34. Ibid.; on Gregory in general, see Fiey, *Nisibe,* 58–60; VHSN 204.

35. Ibid.

36. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 508.

37. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.162–67.

38. See, for example, Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 100. The late eighth-century Theodore Bar Kōnī came from here; see Sidney H. Griffith, "Theodore Bar Kōnî's *Scholion*: A Nestorian *Summa Contra Gentiles* from the First Abbasid Century," in Garsoïan et al., eds., *East of Byzantium,* 54.

39. Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 41; VHSN 266.

40. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13:511; VHSN 311.

41. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13:535; VHSN 277. He, along with another student of Ḥĕnānā, Īšai of Taḥal, were refuted by Ḥĕnānīšōʿ the monk; see the same passage in the *Chronicle of Siirt.*

42. VHSN 296–97.

43. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 554; Vööbus takes this as evidence that he taught at the "School of Balad" (VHSN 296).

44. Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 41.

45. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient,* 1:298–302. Fiey inaccurately places Bābai the Great in this school (Fiey, *Nisibe,* 146).

46. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 511–12.

47. Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 42; see also VHSN 279–80.

48. VHSN 265–68.

49. Fiey, *Nisibe,* 48.

50. TMBG I:109.5–10 (Syriac), II:241 (English).

51. Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 39; VHSN 290.

52. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 198; The Syriac word *eskōlāyē* clearly lies behind the Arabic, as Scher himself notes.

53. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.189.

54. *Chronicle of Siirt* 5: 307; at ibid. 309 he is referred to as the "founder of the school of Dayr Qunnī."

55. Ibid. 308.

56. Ibid. 310; see Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.264, 279; for Yahbalāhā I, see *Chronicle of Siirt* 5: 307.

57. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 107.

58. Ibid.172.

59. Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse,* 290–91, regards this information as legendary. Vööbus takes it to be authentic; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient,* 1:266–72, 316.

60. See, e.g., Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 75. There is the possibility that Mār ʿAbdā may be identical with the famous Mār ʿAbdā from the Syriac and Greek martyrological tradition, see Bedjan, ed., *Acta,* 4:250–53; Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* V.38. He would have founded the monastery and then gone on to become bishop of Hormizd-Ardāšīr.

61. *Chronicle of Siirt* 5: 307.

62. Numerous instances in the *Cause,* passim.

63. *Chronicle of Siirt* 5: 224. "Masters and students" here is from the Syriac literally meaning "transmitters and transmittees."

64. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 512–13; Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III. 253.

65. Ibid., III. 187–97, 246.

66. Īšōʿdĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 47.

67. Vööbus uses this passage to suggest that there were also schools in Ḥeftūn and Bēt Bagaš (VHSN 204–205). The *Book of Chastity* passage is a bit confused.

68. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 171; VHSN 175; Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.208, 211.

69. *Chronicle of Siirt* 7: 170.

70. Ibid. 171.

71. Erica Hunter, "Syriac Inscriptions from al Hira," OC 80 (1996): 79.

72. *Khuzistan Chronicle,* 31.18–21 (Syriac), 26.34–38 (Latin).

73. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 445. See Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* II.642–64.

74. Fiey notes this, but he also notes that O'Leary suggests that Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq, the great translator of the ninth century, went to Gondishapur because no school was there. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.211. For De Lacy O'Leary, See *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), 184–85.

75. TMBG I:175.9 line 67 (Syriac), II:350 line 67 (English), Thomas writes about Bābai of Gĕbīltā, "He planted spiritual cuttings in the courtyards (*dāray*) of the Church." If this is not a general statement, it could describe where the actual schools he founded were.

76. TMBG I: 97.7–8 (Syriac), II: 221–22 (English). The word for "school" here is *bēt yullphānā.*

77. TMBG I:60.20–61.3 (Syriac), II:109 (English); cf. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.140; For a similar reference to Ḥarbat Gĕlāl, see at I:66.17–19 (Syriac), II:119 (English) (cf. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.137).

78. TMBG I:163.7–12 (Syriac), II: 328 (English) (italics mine).

79. After this episode, Māran'ammēh comes to another village with a "famous school" in it; TMBG I:163.20–164.1 (Syriac), II:328–29 (English).

80. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* I.260–63, on the town of Shalmath.

81. TMBG I:116.9–15 (Syriac), II:251–52 (English).

82. TMBG I:117.2–3 (Syriac), II:252 (English).

83. TMBG I:141.6–147.3 (Syriac), II:289–303 (English); a portion of the *mēmrā* on the life of Māran'ammēh composed by Thomas is devoted to Māran'-ammēh's dependence on his teacher, Bābai of Gĕbīltā; see TMBG I:173.21–175.2, (Syriac), II:347–50 lines 35–60 (English); BGSL 212–13; Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature,* 184–85 (although he confuses him with Bābai of Nisibis); Scher, "Étude supplémentaire," 18–19. Assemani also confuses him with Bābai of Nisibis, BO III.1.177–81.

84. TMBG I:141.14–16 (Syriac), II:290 (English).

85. TMBG I:142.2–11 (Syriac) II:290–93 (English) ("station" = *mawtbā*).

86. TMBG I:142.22–143.7 (Syriac), II:235 (English).

87. TMBG I:143.14–144.9 (Syriac) II:296–97 (English). See also ibid., I:174.21–22 (Syriac), II:350 lines 57–58 (English): "The holy rabban Bābai planted sixty schools, / And established sixty men, teachers of truth, in them."

88. On Bābai's works, see TMBG I:144.15–145.12 (Syriac), II:298–99 (English). Further work needs to be done on the significance of Bābai as well as the connections between the school movement and East-Syrian liturgical music.

89. TMBG I:145.18–19 (Syriac), II:300–301 (English). Budge thinks that Abraham is Abraham of Kaškar, the monastic reformer, but he then seems to conflate the two Abrahams in a footnote (II:301 n. 2).

90. TMBG I:131.6–8 (Syriac), II:274 (English).

91. For the whole story, see TMBG I:130.14–135.16 (Syriac), II:273–81. This story could also be analyzed as part of the Syriac tradition of hidden or secret sainthood.

92. TMBG I:217.9–12 (Syriac), II:415 (English).

93. Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature,* 185–86; BGSL 214; VHSN 319.

94. Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.234.

95. TMBG I:145.20–146.6 (Syriac), II:301–2.

96. 'Abdīšō', *Catalogue,* 194 (Chap. CXXVI).

97. Wright, *Short History of Syriac Literature,* 186.

98. Cf. E. G. Clarke, *The Selected Questions of Isho Bar Nun on the Pentateuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1962) and Corrie Molenberg, "Išoʿ bar Nun and Išoʿdad of Merv on the Book of Genesis: A Study of Their Interrelationship," in Frishman and Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, 197–228.

99. See, e.g., Brock, "Two Letters of the Patriarch Timothy."

100. TMBG I:332.14–333.1 (Syriac), II:581–82 (English) This same school in the village of Maqqabtā mentioned by Thomas was founded by Bābai (TMBG I:143.18 (Syriac), II:296 (English)). Gabriel, the future head of a monastery later founded by Cyprian, was raised along with his brother Paul by his mother, a pious widow who devoted herself to prayer, the study of scripture, and almsgiving (TMBG I:361.16–362.10 (Syriac), II:624 (English)). When the boys had increased in age and after studying at East-Syrian schools, they brought their mother to the monastery with them! TMBG I:362.17–363.18 (Syriac), II:625–26 (English).

101. This line is from that portion of the *mēmrā* on Māranʿammēh which describes his teaching; TMBG I:175.9 line 67 (Syriac), II:350 line 67 (English).

102. Kaster, "Notes on 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Schools in Late Antiquity."

103. This issue was raised in Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia*; see, for example, 267–72.

*Chapter 9. The Monastic Context of the East-Syrian School Movement*

1. I translate this as "school student" to differentiate it from *talmīdā*, the more common term for "student."

2. TMBG I:74.3–10 (Syriac), II:132 (English) (based on Budge's translation).

3. Īšōʿyahb III, *Letters*, I:18, 29–34 advises the monks of Bēt ʿĀbē on selecting a new leader and recommends Mār John, who left this office soon after taking it in order to led a solitary life (This letter also appears in TMBG II:104–7 [English]). Letter I:19 (Īšōʿyahb III, *Letters*, Syriac 29–36, Latin 27–31) is then written to this new director.

4. This may be a technical term for the East-Syrian office of a priest who sings nocturnes; see entry in Robert Payne Smith, ed., *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879–1901; repr. New York: Georg Olms, 1999), II:4076. See also BO III/2.820–22.

5. This is apparently another technical idiom. The word *ṣḥāḥā* may also mean "a portion of scripture."

6. TMBG I:75.1–10 (Syriac) (my translation); for Budge's, see II.148–49.

7. Ibid. I:75.10–14 (Syriac), II:149 (English).

8. Ibid. I:76..2 (Syriac), II:150 (English).

9. Ibid. I:78.5–6 (Syriac), II:153 (English).

10. For further usage of the expression *mawtbā da-b-qelāytā* ("The sitting which is in the cell") in a monastic context, see Dadišoʿ Qatraya, *Commentaire du livre d ʿAbba Isaïe (logoi I–XV)*, 1:131.

11. See Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 596.11. This idiom also shows up in a passage quoted in Chapter Eight, TMBG I:163.7–12 (Syriac), II: 328 (English).

12. *Early Christian Mystics*, 185–97, 248–55.

13. Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

14. Another example of this approach is to be found in Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism*. A central example of this cooption can be seen in the "catholicizing"

of St. Antony; for this see Brakke, *Athanasius and Asceticism,* 201–65, as well as Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony.*

15. Arthur Vööbus, *Celibacy, a Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile I; Stockholm, 1951); Robert Murray, "The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church," *New Testament Studies* (1974/5): 59–80; Taeke Jansma, "Aphrahat's *Demonstration* VII.18 and 20: Some Observations on the Discourse on Penance," PdO 5 (1974): 21–48. The best and most recent article on this material is Griffith, "Asceticism in the Church of Syria."

16. See Chapter Three, n. 17.

17. See, e.g., Sidney H. Griffith, "The *Doctrina Addai* as a Paradigm of Christian Thought in Edessa in the Fifth Century," *Hugoye* 6, 2 (2003); see also comments in Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "The Edessan Martyrs and Ascetic Tradition," *The Harp* 6, 2 (1993): 99–110 (ibid. in *Symposium Syriacum V,* 195–206).

18. See, e.g., H. J. W. Drijvers, *East of Antioch: Studies in Early Syriac Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1984).

19. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (1958–60) misses these changes by accepting the attribution of later monastic writings to Ephrem (e.g., II.2–4). In contrast, see, e.g., Edward G. Mathews, "'On Solitaries: Ephrem or Isaac," LM 103 (1990): 91–110.

20. Sidney Griffith, "Setting Right the Church of Syria: Saint Ephraem's Hymns Against Heresies," in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus,* ed. William E. Klingshirn and Mark Vessey (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 97–114; Harvey, "Bishop Rabbula: Ascetic Tradition and Change in Fifth Century Edessa"; see also the reassessment that has occurred regarding the Teaching of Addai, e.g., Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity."

21. Harvey, "Bishop Rabbula: Ascetic Tradition and Change in Fifth Century Edessa"; Mathews, "'On Solitaries"; Theresa Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 115–29. In general, see Pierre Canivet, *Le monachisme syrien selon Théodoret de Cyr* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977).

22. See, for example, Baum and Winkler, *Church of the East,* 14–19.

23. Karel Innemée and Lucas Van Pompay, "La présence des Syriens dans le Wadi al-Natrun (Égypte): à propos des découvertes récentes de peintures et de texts muraux dans l'Église de la Vierge du Couvent des Syriens," PdO 23 (1998): 167–202, esp. 182–83.

24. Cf. Augustine's famous description of this text's importance in his own conversion (*Conf.* VIII.29).

25. The main study of this text is in Draguet's edition (see *Life of Antony* (Syriac) in bibliography). The difference between the Greek and the Syriac led Draguet to form his disputed theory that the Syriac version goes back to an earlier, Copticizing Greek or even a Coptic *Vorlage.*

26. For example, see Chaps. 72–78. Greek paganism is transformed into Biblical idolatry in the Syriac version, which relies particularly on Rom 1 for its understanding of paganism. See Brakke's summary of the differences between the two versions at David Brakke, "The Greek and Syriac Versions of the Life of Antony," LM 107 (1994): 42. The oldest manuscript is from the sixth century, but the translation may be much older. See also Fumihiko F. Takeda, "The Syriac Version of the Life of Antony: A Meeting Point of Egyptian Monasticism with Syriac Native Asceticism," in *Symposuim Syriacum VII,* ed. René Lavenant, OCA 256 (Rome: Pontifical Institute, 1998), 185–94.

27. Fols. 81–254, Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum,* II: 633–38 (dccxxvii). For a discussion of the letters of Antony in Syriac, see Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony,* 16–17.

28. R. Draguet, *Les cinq recensions de l'ascéticon syiaque d'abba Isaïe,* CSCO 122; (Louvain: Peeters, 1968).

29. See, e.g., P. Bettiolo, ed., *Gli Scritti Siriaci di Nilo il Solitario* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1983).

30. Associated with Rufinus, attributed to Jerome in the Syriac; British Library Add. 14648.

31. René Draguet, *Les formes syriaques de la matière de l'histoire Lausiaque,* CSCO 389–90, 398–99 (Louvain: Peeters, 1978). There are four different recensions. Oldest dated edition: *Historia Lausiaca,* Biblioteca Ambrosiana in paper folder No 22, dated 534. See Hatch, *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts,* 68.

32. E.g., British Library, Add. 17176, dated 532; Add. 14609, sixth or seventh century; Add. 14646, sixth century.

33. Anan-Isho', *The Book of Paradise: Being the Histories and Sayings of the Monks and Ascetics of the Egyptian Desert. The Syrian Texts, According to the Recension of Anan-Isho' of Beth Abhe.* 2 vols., ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Printed for Lady Meux by W. Drugulin, Leipzig, 1904).

34. TMBG I:20.8–22.16 (Syriac), II:25–29 (English) tells of the origins of virginity and celibacy, running from Jesus through the prophets, the apostles, and finally the Egytian monks such as Pambo, Antony, and Paul.Throughout his work Thomas quotes the Desert Fathers as sources and examples (e.g., I:28.15–17, II:51–52). He uses events in Egyptian ecclesiastical history as parallels and models similar to scripture in its authority (I:53.9–15, II:94–95; I:81.12–13, II:180–81; I:86.1–2, II:188; I:127.4–9, II:269, I:133.22, II:278; I:205.11–12, II:396; I:219.21, II:419; I:226.6–7, II: 427; and I:326.4–327.10, II:570–73). He even at one point invokes Evagrius's aid for his project (I:192.12, II:376).

35. For example, see how often he is cited in Brock's commentary on Isaac of Nineveh (in bibliography as Isaac of Nineveh, *Second Part*); also see ibid., (versio) xxx–xxxiii for a list of his published works.

36. BGSL 88–90; the situation is in fact even more complex; see John of Apamea, *Dialogues et traités,* 16–19.

37. See Werner Strothmann, *Die syrische Überlieferung der Schriften des Makarios,* Göttinger Orientforschungen. I. Reihe, Syriaca. Bd. 21 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981).

38. *Life of Ephrem* 640.13–643.10. See also Joseph Amar, "Byzantine Ascetic Monachism and Greek Bias in the Vita Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian," OCP 58 (1992): 123–56; Sidney Griffith, "Images of Ephrem: The Syrian Holy Man and His Church," *Traditio* 45 (1989–90): 7–33.

39. Išō'dĕnaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 1.

40. J.-M. Fiey, "Aones, Awun et Awgin (Eugène): Aux origines du monachisme mésopotamien," AB 80 (1962): 52–81.

41. See, e.g., the discussion of one of the earliest and most famous of these figures in Sidney Griffith, "Julian Saba, 'Father of the Monks of Syria,'" JECS 2 (1994): 185–216. Then of course there is the most famous of these figures, Simeon the Sylite. see Robert Doran, trans., *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* (Kalamazoo, Mich.; Cistercian Publications, 1992).

42. Harvey, "Bishop Rabbula: Ascetic Tradition and Change in Fifth Century Edessa."

43. For a general discussion of Evagrius in the Syriac milieu, see Antoine Guillaumont, *Les "kephalaia gnostica" d'Evagre le Pontique,* 173–332. Evagrius's works even spread into Central Asia. N. Sims-Williams, *The Christian Sogdian Manuscript*

*C 2*, Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients; Berliner Turfantexte 12 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985), 168–82.

44. The most significant point in this modern reconstruction was the publication of the two Syriac versions of the *Kephalaia Gnostica*; see Antoine Guillaumont's edition (Evagrius of Pontus, *Kephalaia Gnostica*). It seems the Council was responding to a more developed form of Evagrianism and not necessarily Evagrius's own thought; see István Perczel, "Notes sur la pensée systématique d'Évagre le Pontique," in *Origene e l'alessadrinismo cappadoce (III–IV secolo), atti del 5. Convegno del Gruppo italiano di ricerca su "Origene e la tradizione alessandrina", Bari, 20–22 settembre 2000*, ed. Mario Girardi and M. Marin (Bari: Edipuglia, 2002), 277–97. Perczel draws a contrast between the obscure, fragmented language of Evagrius's works and the coherent system presented by the anti-Origenist sources (279–80) and argues that Evagrius was more interested in epistemology than Christology (280).

45. The fifth-century dating is according to Brock, "Some Uses of the Term Theoria in the Writings of Isaac of Nineveh," 407 footnote 3. On Evagrius's influence, see, for example, Antoine Guillaumont, "Les versions syriaques de l'oeuvre d'Evagre le Pontique et leur role dans la formation du vocabulaire ascetique syriaque," in *Symposium Syriacum III*, 35–41.

46. For an accessible distillation of his thought, see translator's comments, Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, xvii–xl.

47. For a discussion of the Antiochene meaning of the term, see Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 179–81.

48. This is also the case for the notion of the "image of God" deriving ultimately from Gen 1:26–27. For Evagrius the mind is the image of God (e.g., Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 166) and this is placed next to the Antiochene focus on the image; cf. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition*.

49. Columba Stewart, "Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus." JECS 9, 2 (2001): 187; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 75–76. See also idem, "New Perspectives on the Origenist Controversy: Human Embodiment and Ascetic Strategies," *Church History* 59 (1990): 149–54, repr. in Ferguson, ed., *Forms of Devotion*, 257–62.

50. *On Prayer* 3 (Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 193).

51. *Praktikos* 65 (Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 109).

52. *Chapters on Prayer*, 114 (Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 205); see also *Chapters on Prayer*, 66 and 72 (Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 199–200).

53. Evagrius, *Gnosticus* (*Le Gnostique*), 41, ed. Antoine and Claire Guillaumont, SC 356 (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 166.

54. Cf. *Cause* 344.8–345.6 and passim.

55. Chapters 113–20 (Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus*, 205–6).

56. We see a similar process in the West, especially in the works of John Cassian, see, e.g., Steven D. Driver, *John Cassian and the Reading of Egyptian Monastic Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002). J. W. Watt, "The Syriac Adapter of Evagrius' *Centuries*," *Studia Patristica* 17, 3 (1985): 1388–95 argues that the earliest translation of Evagrius derives from a more Antiochene setting.

57. For an accessible introduction, see Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*.

58. István Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Platonic Theology*: A Preliminary Study," in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne: actes du Colloque international de Louvain, 13–16 mai 1998: en l'honneur de H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink*, ed. A. Ph. Segonds and Carlos G. Steel (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2000), 491–570.

59. For a sample of Sergius's translation placed next to the later, more accurate

version of Phokas from the late seventh or early eighth century, see J. M. Hornus, "Le corpus dionysien in syriaque," PdO 1 (1970): 69–93. Sergius also composed an introduction to the spiritual life, which employs many concepts taken from his translation efforts; see P. Sherwood, "Mimro de Serge de Reshayna sur la vie sprituelle," OS 5 (1960): 433–57; 6 (1961): 95–115, 121–56.

60. István Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and Palestinian Origenism," in *The Sabaite Heritage in the Orthodox Church from the Fifth Century to the Present*, ed. Joseph Patrich, OLA 98 (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 261–82.

61. István Perczel, "Une théologie de lumière: Denys l'Aréopagite et Evagre le Pontique," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 45 (1999): 79–120.

62. The first attestation to the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus is from the attempt by Miaphysites in Constantinople to cite him as a source in a debate with Chalcedonians (e.g., Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 14).

63. For a general discussion of Stephen bar Sudaili, the *Book of the Holy Hierotheos*, and other relevant sources, see Frothingham, *Stephen bar Sudaili* and now Karl Pinggéra, *All-Erlösung und All-Einheit: Studien zum, Buch des heligen Hierotheos' und seiner Rezeption in der syrisch-orthodoxen Theologie* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002). For further discussion as well as the text and translation of the work see Stephen bar Sudaili, *The Book of the Holy Hierotheos*, ed. and trans. F. S. Marsh (London: Williams and Norgate, 1927). Frothingham and March both wrote prior to the rediscovery of the significance of Evagrius's works and hence fail to emphasize his influence on Stephen.

64. Frothingham, *Stephen bar Sudaili*, 46–47.

65. For a discussion of Stephen's Evagrian background, see Guillaumont, *Les "kephalaia gnostica" d'Evagre le Pontique*, 302–32.

66. For a similar complaint, see Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšō'*, 10. Vööbus's large opus on Syrian asceticism (Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*), which contains a number of problems, remains to be replaced.

67. For a brief summary history of the movement, see Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest*, 361–64.

68. For an anthology of Syriac writers of monastic "spirituality" running from Ephrem, Aphrahat, and the *Liber Graduum* in the fourth century up through the "reform" monastic writers, see Sebastian Brock, ed. and trans., *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1987). For a general treatment of many of the same authors, see Seely J. Beggiani, *Introduction to Eastern Christian Spirituality, The Syriac Tradition* (London: University of Scranton Press, 1991).

69. A monograph by Sabino Chialà on Abraham and the monastic revival is forthcoming.

70. For a history of the monasteries of Īzlā from their origins to the present, see Fiey, *Nisibe*, 134–59. See also Sebastian Brock, "Notes on Some Monasteries on Mount Izla," *Abr Nahrain* 19 (1980/1); 1–19 (repr. in Brock, ed., *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity*).

71. Canon 8 (*Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 170).

72. Interestingly, Thomas of Margā apologizes for Bābai taking charge of the Church despite his low rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy by stating that it was justified by Bābai's capacity as a teacher (*mallphānā*). TMBG I.52.14–54.14 (Syriac), II:93–97 (English).

73. On the elevation of solitary, private reading as the new goal at the monastery, see TMBG I:55.6–22 (Syriac), II:98 (English).

74. Charbel C. Chahine, "Le témoignage de Thomas de Margâ sur les extraits d'Abraham Nethptâîâ dans le *Livre du Paradis* de 'nânîšo'," *Augustinianum* 40

(2000), 439–60. For earlier works, see BGSL 131–32; Raymond Tonneau, "Abraham de Natpar," OS 2 (1957): 337–50; A. Penna, "Abramo di Nathpar," *Rivista di Studi Orientali* 32 (1957): 415–31; Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšōʿ*, 26–28.

75. These texts can be found in *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 150–62 and 163–75. There are also the rules of Bābai the Great, extent in Arabic, which are also comparable (ibid. 176–84).

76. See on Mār Aḥā's control of his own passions, TMBG I:119.2–16 (Syriac), II: 255–6 (English).

77. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 154.

78. *Statutes*, 59–60.

79. Martin Tamcke, "Theology and Practice of Communal Life According to Dadiso," *The Harp* 4, 1, 2, 3 (1991): 180. See canons of Mārūtā in *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 115–49.

80. See, e.g., the description of the asceticism of Narsai at Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 611.3–13.

81. Philippe Escolan, *Monachisme et église: le monachisme du IVe au VIIe siècle: un ministère charismatique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1999), 183ff.

82. Ibid. 186.

83. *Statutes*, 77-8, 96.

84. Canon 7 (*Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 170) and Tamcke, "Theology and Practice," 184 respectively.

85. E.g., Mār Abā I learns the psalms at the School of Nisibis soon after his conversion; *Life of Abā*, 217.2–4.

86. Canon 8 (*Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 161).

87. Canon of Ḥĕnānā, 15 (*Statutes*, 98–99).

88. *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 154–55 (Canon 1), 170 (Canon 8).

89. Canon 10 (*Statutes*, 80). It is possible that the restriction forbidding two brothers to be alone together was designed to prevent homoerotic sexual activity between them. This would especially have been a problem at a school that included younger, and therefore more sexually appealing, men among its students.

90. Canon 9 (*Statutes*, 96).

91. Canon 4 (*Statutes*, 94).

92. Canon 14 (*Statutes*, 98).

93. Ibid. 99–100.

94. Bābai, *Commentary on the Kephalaia Gnostica*, 8–49, Syriac and German translation. For a summary of much of the introductory arguments, see Guillaumont, *Les "kephalaia gnostica" d'Evagre le Pontique*, 259–76.

95. For the unredacted version of this text see Evagrius of Pontus, *Kephalaia Gnostica*, 159.

96. Bābai, *Commentary on the Kephalaia Gnostica*, 292–94.

97. On the influence of Isaac, see, e.g., Sebastian Brock, "From Qatar to Tokyo, by Way of Mar Saba: The Translations of Isaac of Beth Qatraye (Isaac the Syrian)," *Aram* 11–12 (1999/2000): 475–84.

98. Among other things, Isaac's use of the term *Theoria* clearly ties him to the Evagrian corpus, cf. Brock, "Some Uses of the Term Theoria in the Writings of Isaac of Nineveh."

99. Moreover, Brock's edition of the "Second Part" of his opus (Isaac of Nineveh, *Second Part*) makes it a particularly accessible text to examine. Translations below are Brock's.

100. Isaac of Nineveh, *Second Part*, XXII.1–3.

101. Ibid. XVII; see footnote 1.2 on page 91.

102. Ibid. XIX.4.

103. See, e.g., the title of Sebastian Brock's book on Ephrem, *The Luminous Eye*; see also pp. 71–79.

104. Isaac of Nineveh, *Second Part*, XIX.5–6.

105. Ibid. V.31.

106. Ibid. XIV.26.

107. Ibid. XXI.13.

108. Ibid. XX.15.

109. Ibid. XXIX.5; on reading in general, see the whole of ibid. XXIX

110. Ibid. XXX.8.

111. Ibid. XXXI.1.

112. Ibid. XXXI.1; see also XVIII.2 for a critique of those who would rely solely on "the reading and recounting of the Scripture and knowledge of it."

113. Ibid. XXX.10.

114. On this term and its background, see Sebastian Brock, "Passover, Annunciation and Epiclesis: some remarks on the term *aggen* in the Syriac versions of Lk 1.35," *Novum Testamentum* 24 (1982): 222–33.

115. Isaac of Ninevah, *Second Part*, XVI.5.

116. "wondrous revelation" XLI.2, cf. n. 2.4, for Bābai and Dadīšō'. "Wonder at the divine Nature is a revelation of the New World. Revelations of the New World are wondrous stirrings concerning God. With these mysteries all rational nature will be stirred in that future existence, in that heavenly abode." (VIII.4–5; see 7 also) cf. XLI.2.

117. Ibid. XX.23.

118. Ibid. XXXV.5 and 6 respectively.

119. Ibid. XXXV.6–8.

120. Ibid. XXXV.13.

121. *Cause* 356.6; 371.7; and 378.2.

122. *Life of Antony* 72–80; Syriac version: *Life of Antony* (Syriac), 118–28.

123. For instances of his antinomianism, see Isaac of Ninevah, *Second Part*, XVIII.2; XXXI.6.

124. For passages on grace, see, for example, ibid. V.21 and V.31.

125. Brock, "The Prayer of the Heart in Syriac Tradition"; idem, "The Spirituality of the Heart in Syriac Tradition."

126. Brock, "The Prayer of the Heart in Syriac Tradition."

127. Ibid. 139–40 (repr. 141–42).

128. "From the fifth century onwards, when Syriac spirituality came under the increasingly strong influence of its Greek counterpart, most Syriac writers treat the *nous*, or 'spiritual intellect', as identical with the heart. A few writers adhered strictly to the older terminology, but most came to prefer the newer; many in fact employed both terms, more or less synonymously." Sebastian Brock, *The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1987), xxvi.

129. See the numerous connections drawn among the three authors in Brock's notes to his edition of Isaac of Ninevah, *Second Part*.

130. Isaac of Ninevah, *Second Part*, versio, XXII.

131. See citation list in appendix of Dadīšō 'Qaṭrāyā, *Commentary on the Book of Abba Isaiah*.

132. Abramowski, "Dadisho Qatraya and His Commentary on the Book of the Abbas Isaiah," esp. 73–75.

133. Trans. Brock, *A Brief Outline of Syriac Literature*, 228, from a translation of Dadīšō' 'Qaṭrāyā, *Commentary on the Book of Abba Isaiah*, XI.17–18.

134. X.2 (Dadīšō 'Qaṭrāyā, *Commentary on the Book of Abba Isaiah*, 140; text, CSCO 326); Abramowski, "Dadisho Qatraya and his Commentary on the Book

of the Abbas Isaiah," 74. I have corrected problems in the text of the original article's publication and adjusted the translation to fit the usage in this volume.

135. The word "mawtbā" as it is used here may refer to either the group reading of the psalms or, possibily, to group study.

136. Dadīšōʿ Qaṭrāyā, *Commentary on the Book of Abba Isaiah,* 132.4–6 (text, CSCO 326).

137. Ibid., 132.12–15.

138. Ibid., 179.17.

139. Ibid., 179.18–21.

140. Ibid., 180.21.

141. Ibid., 181.2–3.

142. Ibid., 181.13–182.7.

143. As translated into English and quoted by Abramowski, "Dadisho Qatraya and his Commentary on the Book of the Abbas Isaiah," 67. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation," 19, associates Dadīšōʿ's critique with similar statements in the writings of Athanasius and Ephrem; see also n. 15.

144. Abramowski, "Dadisho Qatraya and his Commentary on the Book of the Abbas Isaiah," 69–71.

145. BGSL 209–10. See "*A Medico-Mystical Work by Simon of Taibutheh* (Syriac text with introduction and translation)," in Mingana, ed., *Early Christian Mystics,* 1–69 and 281–320. For example, at pp. 41–45 Simeon employs liturgical language to describe the different types of knowledge as altars.

146. Ibid. 38–9.

147. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 459–60; on Rabban Šābūr, see also Īšōʿdenaḥ, *Book of Chastity,* 55; Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne,* III.280. The Syriac words *mallphānā* and *eskōlāyē* are clearly behind the Arabic here.

148. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 453. As Scher notes, this seems to be the Mār Gannī of the *Book of Chastity,* 28.

149. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 460.

150. On its sources see 135a, *Life of Abraham of Kaškar and Bābai of Nisibis,* 164 (Syriac) / 170 (French). A life by Bābai is also referred to in the text, but it is not clear if this counts as one of the three (ibid. 163/169 [133b]).

151. Ibid. 162 (132b-133a).

152. Ibid. 163 (133a).

153. Ibid. 163 (133a-b): *talmad, yullphānā.*

154. Ibid. 163–4 (134a).

155. The text reads: "intercourse and human beings," but I suspect the *waw* is a corruption of a *dalath.* If I am wrong, then it should read: "from intercourse and human beings." The difference is minor.

156. Ibid. 164 (134a-b).

157. Ibid. 165 (134b).

158. Ibid. 162 (132b).

159. Ibid. 166 (136b).

160. Ibid. 166 (136a).

161. Ibid.

162. Ibid. 167 (138a).

163. Ibid. 168 (138b). We know that this line was repeated in other monastic histories. For example, it was repeated by Cyril of Scythopolis among others: see John Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine 314–631* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 63.

164. *Cause* 351.5–7.

165. *Cause* 336.13–337.2.

166. *Cause* 351.9–11.

167. Instances are common: e.g., Mār Aḥā at TMBG I.123.1–125.14 (Syriac), II:262–66, knows of his own death (again, I:138.1–7, II:285). See also ibid. I:108.16–19 (Syriac), II:240 (English).

168. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ*, 204.

169. A. Hughes, "Imagining the Divine: Ghazali on Imagination, Dreams, and Dreaming," *JAAR* 70 (2002): 35.

170. This is not unlike the distinction between *epistēmē* and *gnôsis* in the Hermetic corpus, see Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 101.

171. TMBG I:68.15–18 (Syriac), II:122 (English).

172. Ibid. I:69.2.

173. In general, see Stewart, *"Working the Earth of the Heart"*.

174. On the concerns about Messalianism, see, e.g., Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšōʿ*, 23–24.

175. On the function of this dichotomy in the study of religion, see Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East"* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 26–28.

176. See, e.g., the discussion in Russell, "Ephraem the Syrian on the Utility of Language and the Place of Silence."

177. One interesting example comes from the rather late *Life of Mār Awgēn*. When the parents of a young boy whom Awgēn has helped to bring back to life offer to leave their resurrected son at the monastery, Awgēn responds telling them first to send the child to a school (*eskōlē*) and that later after he has studied he may enter the monastery (Bedjan, *Acta*, 3: 423. 5–8).

178. TMBG I:28.10–12 (Syriac), II:51 (English).

179. Ibid. I.62.2–5 (Syriac), II:111 (English).

180. Ibid. I:90.15–91.4 (Syriac), II:211 (English); I:112.6–9 (Syriac), II:245 (English).

181. Ibid. I:78.12–16 (Syriac), II:174 (English); on him, see BGSL 201–3.

182. Ibid. I:78.17- 79.21 (Syriac), II:175–77 (English).

183. Ibid. I:79.23–80.1 (Syriac), II:177–78 (English); his monastic writing is described in I:86.18–88.4 (Syriac), II:189–92 (English).

184. See, e.g., *Book of Perfection* 4:4 (Martyrius, *Writing*, CSCO 200: 117–36); "However more excellent and elevated the solitary life is, one must first receive instruction and training in a group with brothers. Otherwise, he is like a merchant with his cargo alone having never before been tested on the open sea," ibid., 117).

185. TMBG I:23.20–24.2 (Syriac), II:41–42 (also quoted in BO III. I. P4 col 1).

186. TMBG I:297.11–299.8 (Syriac), II:529–33 English). This is similar to Sāhdōnā's quotations from the "pagan philosophers." Martyrius, *Writings*, CSCO 200: 15–16.

187. TMBG I:270.19–271.8 (Syriac), II:495 (English); see also the tension between elegance and poverty at I:112.18–114.8 (Syriac), II:246–48 (English).

188. E.g., ibid. I.136.1–2 (Syriac), II:282 (English).

189. Išōʿyahb III, *Letters*, 242.20 (Syriac), 175.25 (Latin) (Letter 3.10).

190. Chase Robinson, *Empire and Elites After the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), ix. See also 41–44.

191. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It*, 198; for translation of text, see Brock, "North Mesopotamia in the Late Seventh Century," 66–67.

192. This affair is treated variously in the following works and those works

cited below: Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse,* 278–80. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch,* 47–51; VHSN 299–317; Antoine Guillaumont, *Les "kephalaia gnostica" d'Evagre le Pontique,* 188–96; Tamcke, *Katholikos-Patriarch Sabrīšōʿ,* 31–39.

193. O. Braun, *Timothei patriarchae I epistulae* (CSCO 74–75; Louvain, 1914–15), 233–34 (Syriac) and 161 (Latin).

194. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 511–12.

195. Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse,* 293.

196. See discussion in Becker, *Sources for the History of the School of Nisibis,* Introduction.

197. *Cause* 390.7–393.3.

198. VHSN 238–42; BGSL 127; de Vries, "Die syrisch-nestorianische Haltung zu Chalkedon," 627–29.

199. ʿAbdīšōʿ, *Catalogue,* 83–84 (chap. 59).

200. Scher, ed., *Traités,* 53–82.

201. *Contra* de Vries, "Die syrisch-nestoriansiche Haltung zu Chalkedon," 627.

202. Scher, ed., *Traités,* 55.14–56.

203. Ibid. 58.2ff.

204. Ibid., 74.8–75.10.

205. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 509. Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 127, 139. See also *Khuzistan Chronicle,* 18.1–9.

206. Molenberg, "The Silence of the Sources," 152–55.

207. Reinink, "'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth'," 86. Reinink fits this with the *Cause*'s numerous references to the School's "tradition" (*mašlmānūtā*) (cf. n. 42 p. 87) and its citing of Basil (of Caesarea), Evagrius (of Pontus), and John Chrysostom (ibid. 85 and n. 37; *Cause* 377.6–378.3). Cf. A. de Halleux, "La christologie de Martyrius-Sahdona dans l'évolution du nestorianisme," 30–31.

208. Abramowski, "Babai der Grosse," passim; idem, "Die Christologie Babais des Grossen," passim. See also Chediath, *The Christology of Mar Babai the Great,* esp. 49–53, 76–78, 172–183 passim, 192–93.

209. E.g., Abramowski, "Die Christologie Babais des Grossen," 222–23; Brock, "Christology of the Church of the East," 140–42.

210. Bābai knew more about Western ecclesiastical thought than his predecessors. Cf. the silence of Barḥadbĕšabbā's *Ecclesiastical History* on events from 438 onward (Abramowski, *Untersuchungen zum Liber Heraclides des Nestorius,* 35).

211. Bābai the Great, *Liber de Unione,* 137.31–138.6 (versio 111.6–12). The full Syriac title is *On the Divinity and on the Humanity and on the Person of the Unity.*

212. Abramowski, "Babai der Grosse," 315–16. See also Abramowski, "Die Christologie Babais des Grossen," 233–34.

213. Cf. *On Rogations,* 69.14–71.16, esp. 71.13; *On Golden Friday,* 62.1 (pp. in Scher, ed., *Traités*).

214. Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language," 322–28.

215. Reinink, "Babai the Great's Life of George," esp. 183–85.

216. Ibid. 183 n. 66.

217. For an examination of the sources for the life of Martyrios, see de Halleux, "Martyrios-Sahdona." His Christology is discussed at idem, "La christologie de Martyrius-Sahdona dans l'évolution du nestorianisme," 5–32, and earlier at de Vries, "Die syrisch-nestoriansiche Haltung zu Chalkedon," 629–34.

218. de Halleux, "La christologie de Martyrius," 31.

219. E.g., Bābai the Great, *Liber de Unione,* 75.9–83.5 provides a genealogy of heresy, focusing primarily on Cyril of Alexandria, and culminating in Justinian, the Three Chapters controversy, and Ḥĕnānā.

220. Ibid., 181–99; see 183.8, 187.18, 195.19. See also *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 532, where a work against such a stance is attributed to Bābai.

221. Bābai, *Commentary on the Kephalaia Gnostica*, 294–95.

222. Ibid. 264–65.

223. Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, 280. Cf. Abramowski, "Babai der Grosse," 291.

224. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 530.

225. Gero, *Barṣauma of Nisibis*, 67–72; we are told that Abraham of Bēt Rabban had trouble with the bishop of the city as well (Barḥadbĕšabbā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 624.5).

226. *Chronicle of Siirt* 13: 510.

227. For an attempt at contextualizing one of Narsai's *memre* within these events, see Corrie Molenberg, "Narsai's memra on the reproof of Eve's daughters and the <tricks and devices> they perform," LM 106 (1993): 65–87. Similarly, see Corrie Molenberg, "As if from Another World. Narsai's Memra 'Bad is the time.'" in *All Those Nations . . . Cultural Encounters Within and with the Near East*, ed. H. L. J. Vanstiphout et al. (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1999), 101–8.

228. E.g., Bābai, *Commentary on the Kephalaia Gnostica*, 124 on learning and its steps.

229. I note the recently discovered inscription from the twelfth century which describes an institution of learning in the vicinity of the Mar Jacob church. I would like to thank Gabriel Akyüz, the priest of the Church of the Forty Martyrs in Mardin, for sharing this inscription with me.

*Conclusion: Study as Ritual in the Church of the East*

1. C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 3.

2. TMBG I: 173.21–174.4 (Syriac) II:347 lines 35–40 (English).

3. Jaeger, *Envy of Angels*, 2–4.

4. The manuscript reading, which Nau presents in a footnote, seems better than his suggested emendation.

5. Barḥadbĕšabbā ʿArbāyā, *Ecclesiastical History*, 611.3–13

6. See Chabot's introductory comments in his text and translation, Išōʿyahb III, *Life of Išōʿsabran.*

7. Ibid. 525.

8. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 202.

9. "In ritualization, power is not external to its workings; it exists only insofar as it is constituted with and through the lived body, which is both the body of society and the social body," ibid. 204.

10. *Cause* 332.12–14.

11. For the East, see Jaclyn L. Maxwell, "Preaching to the Converted: John Chrysostom and His Audience in Antioch" (Ph.D. dissertation; History Department, Princeton University, 2000). For the West, see Lisa K. Bailey, "Preaching and Pastoral Care in Late Antique Gaul: the Eusebius Gallicanus sermon collection" (Ph.D. dissertation; History Department, Princeton University, 2004).

12. Pierre Hadot., *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, (trans. M. Chase; (New York: Blackwell, 1995), the English version of *Exercises spirituals et philosophie antique*, published in 1987. See his recent synthetic

treatment, Pierre Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. M. Chase (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

13. This connection is also emphasized in Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2, The Use of Pleasure,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985), 229–46.

14. See, for example, Pierre Hadot, "Théologie, exégèse, revelation, écriture dans la philosophie grecque," in Michel Tardieu, ed., *Les règles de l'interprétation* (Paris: Cerf, 1987), 12–34.

15. Hadot, *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* 240.

16. *Cause* 350.6–352.4.

17. *Cause* 378.8–379.11.

18. Bendict Thomas Viviano, *Study as Worship: Aboth and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), ix.

19. E.g., George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 2:239–47. Interestingly, this famous scholar of Judaism published a piece on the School of Nisibis, see idem, "The Theological School at Nisibis," in *Studies in the History of Religions,* ed. D. G. Lyon and G. F. Moore (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 255–67.

20. *Cause* 396.13–397.2.

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# Bibliography

In order to save space the bibliography contains only those primary and secondary sources that are cited more than once through the course of the book.

*Abbreviations*

AB *Analecta Bollandiana*
CAG *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*
CSCO *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
JA *Journal Asiatique*
JAAR *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JECS *Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
LM *Le Muséon*
NPNF *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994)
OC *Oriens Christianus*
OCA *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*
OCP *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OLA *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*
OLP *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*
OS *L'Orient Syrien*
PdO *Parole de l'Orient*
PL *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1844-)
PO *Patrologia Orientalis*
SC *Sources Chrétiennes*
SP *Studia Patristica*
VC *Vigiliae Christianae*

BGSL = Baumstark, Anton. *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur.* Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Weber, 1922; repr. Bonn: De Gruyter, 1968.

BO = *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana,* ed. and trans. J. S. Assemani. Rome, 1719–28. Repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2000.

TMBG = Thomas of Marga, *Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas Bishop of Marga A. D. 840,* 2 vols., ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge. London: Kegen Paul, 1893; repr. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2003.

VHSN = Vööbus, Arthur. *History of the School of Nisibis.* CSCO 266. Louvain: Peeters, 1965.

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